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THE REPRESENTATION OF EVIL IN THE LATE NOVELS OF VICTOR HUGO

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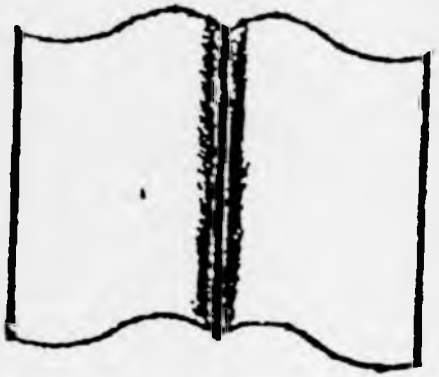
THIS VOLUME HAS A
VERY TIGHT BINDING



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SUMMARY

Evil in Hugo's later novels has rarely been examined. This subject is clearly incompatible with the received image of Hugo (based on earlier works such as Les Misérables) as a prophet of optimism and progress. This thesis will demonstrate that it is reasonable that Hugo should have expressed negative thoughts in the novels that he wrote in the 1860s and 1870s, since contemporary Western writers were also producing pessimistic works. Attention will be drawn to the personal anxieties and disappointments which only served to intensify Hugo's experience of the universal *fin de siècle* malaise.

The thesis will posit that the universe of Hugo's later novels is much darker than that which is delineated in his earlier novels. Hugo's renewed interest in the works of de Sade indicates his increasingly pessimistic perception of human nature (Introduction). The representation of benevolent motherhood that is found in the earlier novels has been supplanted by the depiction of vampiric female monsters in their successors (Chapter 1). The later novels do not focus on positive creation and the movement towards progress, but on negative metamorphosis that is often rapid and invariably irrevocable (Chapter 2). Justice can be seen to be done in the earlier novels because evildoers are eradicated, but in their successors villains prosper whilst the innocent are treated harshly (Chapter 3). In Hugo's earlier novels, laughter and dreaming are depicted negatively but their sinister nature has become much more profound in their successors (Chapter 4). Disdain for human existence is most vividly suggested by ravenous mouths which seek to ingest mankind into the foul chaos they contain and this chaos is predominantly feminine (Chapter 5). Whilst the thesis would not deny Hugo's belief in God, it will assert that in his later novels Hugo portrays a universe in which the forces of darkness are extremely powerful (Conclusion).

Foreword

All quotations of works by Hugo and page references are from the Oeuvres Complètes de Victor Hugo, Edition chronologique, publiée sous la direction de Jean Massin, Club Français du Livre, 18 volumes, Paris, 1967-1969, unless otherwise indicated.

Introduction

Research into the evil delineated in Hugo's later novels has seldom been conducted. In the 1950s, the eminent Hugolian Jean-Bertrand Barrère declared L'Homme Qui Rit "probablement l'oeuvre la plus pessimiste de Victor Hugo".[1] However, critics have usually chosen not to focus on the pessimism of Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit or Quatrevingt-Treize. Victor Brombert is almost alone in his endorsement and expansion of Barrère's view.[2]

Indeed, the later novels have not always received the measured attention they deserve. In Le Temps de la Contemplation, Jean Gaudon seems to be dismissive of the disconsolateness of Hugo's exile and he awarded the title 'Digressions hugoliennes' to his preface of the Club Français du Livre edition of L'Homme Qui Rit, which would suggest that this major work was not held in high esteem by the contemporary leading authority on Hugo.[3]

The later novels have often been considered in terms of Hugo's poetry and are frequently compared to Hugo's longest novel, Les Misérables, which preceded them. For instance, in his preface to the Folio edition of Quatrevingt-Treize, Yves Gohin asserts that "la rédemption de la Terreur ne viendra jamais durant l'exil relayer à voix haute la malédiction des Châtiments" and he discerns that the good bishop of Les Misérables is the precursor to the hero Gauvain: "dans sa conscience, avivée par Myriel, un Gauvain se débat contre un Cimourdain".[4] These references are made in order to affirm that Quatrevingt-Treize has a positive, rather than a negative, significance.

In his introduction to the most recent Laffont edition, Gohin demonstrates that it is also customary to assert the human escapes which occur at the conclusion to each of the later novels. Gohin accentuates the

elopement at the end of Les Travailleurs de la Mer, the beatification of Gwynplaine and Dea and the rescue of the *petits Fléchards* in Quatrevingt-Treize:

> "les trois enfants qui ont mis en menus morceaux le livre vénérable des martyrs et des superstitions, vivront au moins pour l'amour qu'ils représentent, mieux que le couple niais de Déruchette avec Ebenezer, mieux même que le couple angelisé de Gwynplaine avec Dea".[5]

These triumphs result in considerable human destruction and yet in this preface, Yves Gohin does not draw attention to the scenes of devastation with which Hugo concludes his later novels. Gohin gives such a bright assessment of Quatrevingt-Treize that he interprets even the merciless Cimourdain and the martyrdom of the hero in a positive light:

> "sous la voix sévère de Cimourdain, sous la rêverie déchirée de Gauvain, le vieux Hugo a fait jaser l'Eros qui sera vainqueur".[6]

Although Hugo's final novel is principally dedicated to portraying the civil war between royalists and revolutionaries during the Terror, and would therefore seem to display the ferocity of Bellona, Gohin perceives the prevalence of Eros in Quatrevingt-Treize.

Criticism of Les Travailleurs de la Mer has not been without some analysis of the more sinister dimensions of this novel. Indeed, *la pieuvre* has consistently attracted critical attention. Appreciation of Les Travailleurs de la Mer has, however, been dominated by Professor Seebacher's introduction to the Pléiade edition of the novel.[7] In his consideration, Seebacher seems to ally Les Travailleurs de la Mer to the positive rather than to the negative. His proposition that the marine grotto replicates the cathedral in Notre-Dame de Paris disregards the distinctly evil nature of the former edifice. The cathedral was man-made; the grotto was specifically crafted by the sea, to fulfil the specific purpose of putting men to death. It is a "palais de la Mort, contente"

(Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Club français du livre, XII, p. 692). What is more, it is the residence of a monster that is physically and morally grotesque. The cathedral in Notre-Dame de Paris comprised the celebrated Hugolian insignia, 'H', but the underwater grotto does not. As in Notre-Dame de Paris, the 'H' of Les Travailleurs de la Mer is a vertical, architectural expression, in the form of the *Durande* trapped between the two *Douvres* rocks. The grotto is only one in a series of subterranean chambers of death, succeeding the sewers of Les Misérables and preceding *la cave pénale* and the refuges of the *Vendéens* in Quatrevingt-Treize.

In his work Ecrire Hugo, Henri Meschonnic does, however, bear witness to the lack of optimism in the later novels:

> "les trois derniers romans accomplissent un trajet dantesque d'exploration du monde et de l'histoire. Ce trajet était déjà dans un des livres de poèmes. Le premier s'achève sur 'il n'y eut plus rien que la mer', pendant que s'éloigne un couple heureux. Le second s'enfonce 'dans l'ombre en regardant la mer', et le couple, qui pouvait être heureux, est mort. Le troisième est un envol mêlé de l'ombre et de la lumière, et à lui seul il reproduit ce trajet de l'engloutissement vers la remontée".[8]

Nevertheless, Meschonnic does not recognise the extent of the pessimism in the later novels. Even though L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize both close with a death and a suicide, Meschonnic makes a much more positive reading of the latter novel.[9] There appears to be an absolute refusal among critics to suggest that "le vieux Hugo" would have completed his final novel with anything other than an optimistic ending. Yet "la remontée" of Quatrevingt-Treize is not the irrepressible ascendancy towards progress. It is the rising of the hero's soul, after the *guillotine* blade has brutally fallen upon his head, and the most humanitarian exponent of the Revolution is eradicated. Emphasis continues to be upon descent and decline in Quatrevingt-Treize.

Critics have mostly not, therefore, seriously treated the subject of

evil in the later novels. In the past decade, interest has been renewed in these works. The most emphatic exhortation against disregarding the negative and the sinister in Hugo's later novels was made in 1984, by Victor Brombert, in the Epilogue to his work

Novel. Brombert insists on "the inadequacy of a naïve reading of Hugo as the reassuring bard of progress, of light, of redemptive love and of Satan's ultimate salvation".[10] However, it is noticeable that in the 1985 publication L'Homme Qui Rit ou la Parole-Monstre de Victor Hugo, C.W. Thompson and Jean-Pierre Reynaud are the only two contributors who chose to focus on Hugo's representation of malignity in this novel. Whilst Reynaud considers the relationship between laughter and death in his chapter 'Le Rire Monstre', Jean Gaudon and Anthony Zielonka discuss humour in L'Homme Qui Rit but they fail to remark that most of the humour in the novel is profoundly black. It still appears customary to emphasise the positive in the later novels.

Brombert asserts that it is inexact to overlook the darker aspects of Hugo's novels, but it would also be erroneous to attempt to suggest that all of the works written by Hugo during the 1860s and 1870s were entirely pessimistic. Some remarkably optimistic texts were produced by Hugo during the period in which he wrote his later novels. Many poems in Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois are without any trace of pessimism; the dramas of Théâtre en Liberté, such as La Grand'Mère, are also predominantly optimistic. By 1873, Hugo had endured considerable political disillusionment, his eldest son had died and he had been obliged to commit his daughter to a mental asylum, yet in August of that year, he wrote the poem Hymne:

> "Gloire à la terre! Gloire à l'aube où Dieu paraît!
> Au fourmillement d'yeux ouverts dans la forêt,
> Aux fleurs, aux nids que le jour dore!

Gloire au blanchissement nocturne des sommets!
Gloire au ciel bleu qui peut, sans s'épuiser jamais,
Faire des dépenses d'aurore!" (La Légende des Siècles, Deuxième Série, Club Français du Livre, XV, pp. 665-666)

It could hardly be denied that this poem is radiant indeed.

I am not trying to deny the existence of these brighter works, but I do question whether they should be considered so much more significant than their opposites, the later novels. Such light plays as "la petite comédie" La Grand'Mère are indubitably "pleine de charme et de grâce", but can they seriously be deemed as important as Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit or Quatrevingt-Treize?[11] The brevity of the optimistic works should be noted, and they appear to be the result of only momentary bursts of renewed hope, rather than of sustained confidence. Hugo devoted years to the composition of his later novels, but he spent only days or weeks on the brighter dramas and verse of the period. Could it not be that des Rues et des Bois, the Théâtre en Liberté and the Légende des Siècles provided Hugo with much needed respite from his gloomier preoccupations, and that the poetical works also gave Hugo the opportunity to sustain the popular success of Châtiments and Les Contemplations?[12]

In the 1860s and 1870s, therefore, Hugo did express optimism, but in verse, in the *genres* of drama and poetry, not in the *genre* of the novel. There are clearly good reasons for depicting pessimism in the form of a novel rather than in another literary *genre*. In Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Hugo asserts that "le mal...est chaos" (Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 705) and verse is patently incompatible with the concept of chaos because of the order and harmony inherent in its meter. The narrative form of the novel allowed Hugo to manifest evil being designed, perpetrated and endured. From 1864-73, Hugo was preoccupied with demonstrating evil in operation:

"c'est au mal commis par des hommes à l'égard de leurs semblables

> qu'Hugo s'en prend avec le plus d'acharnement; l'injustice, la faim, la misère, la prostitution, le travail des enfants".[13]

Long narrative in prose enabled Hugo to create detailed characters and to display the full consequences of their deeds.

It must also not be forgotten that the novel was important to Hugo because its form permitted him to interpolate and to make digressions. Most of the extradiegetic material in the later novels, if one considers such chapters as 'Les Comprachicos' in L'Homme Qui Rit or 'Leur Vie en Guerre' in Quatrevingt-Treize, merely adds to the pessimism of their *récits*. Hugo intended to maintain his presence in these works and the novel allowed him to perform the dual rôles of narrator and commentator, on the causes and consequences of human actions over an extended period of time.

It should not seem odd that there is pessimism in Hugo's later novels, since his contemporary European novelists were also not expressing optimistic thought. It seems that Hugo went into exile at a time when hope was fading throughout the continent. Henri Peyre has reminded us that in the latter half of the nineteenth century, despondency was a prominent feature of European culture:

> "l'époque où Hugo s'appliqua avec le plus d'acharnement à revêtir d'une forme poétique ses réflexions philosophiques, 1850-1860 environ, vit déferler sur l'Europe occidentale une vague de pessimisme qui n'épargna pas la vitalité peu commune de l'exilé. Heine, Wagner, Baudelaire, Leconte de Lisle, Flaubert, Arnold et James Thomson en Angleterre, des philosophes matérialistes et scientistes, vécurent plus intensément sans doute qu'Hugo ce désespoir".[14]

I would, however, dispute this final claim. Hugo's pessimism seems only to have grown deeper as the years passed. His later novels do suggest that Hugo had an acute appreciation of this widespread "désespoir".

The sombre nature of Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize suggests that Hugo was susceptible to a universal

European malaise, but these works also demonstrate that Hugo became increasingly pessimistic. Although his mental and physical health was exceptionally robust, many factors in Hugo's life can nevertheless be seen to have intensified his personal despair.[15] Socio-political and personal events of the 1860s and 1870s cannot be considered to have cheered Hugo. It is well-known Hugo compared his own situation in exile to that of Napoleon on St. Helena. Hugo certainly over-estimated his own significance. Increasingly, his sustained efforts to remain influential in the international world of politics met with defeat, as when his endeavour to save the life of the Emperor Maximilien ended in failure:

> "je demande au Mexique la vie de Maximilien. L'obtiendrai-je? Oui. Et peut-être à cette heure est-ce déjà fait".[16]

In fact, Maximilien had already been shot and the news of his execution must have been a particularly harsh blow to the abolitionist author.

Hugo persistently suffered such political ineffectualness, but the rule of his bitter enemy Louis-Napoleon continued to endure. When he left France in 1851, Hugo could not have envisaged that he would be in exile for almost two decades. Even in 1870, a plebiscite revealed that several millions of Hugo's countrymen still supported the Emperor. Hugo appeared to be completely ostracised.

Unlike Napoleon, however, Hugo did return to France before he died. It would be imagined that this homecoming would gladden the elderly writer, but it served to considerably deepen his despair. Hugo discovered that his continued to be the lone, unwelcome voice when he pleaded for clemency for the Communards. He could not persuade his compatriots and he had to observe the brutal repression of those he had tried to defend. In 1866, Hugo had remonstrated that progress was being resisted:

> "à Paris, abaissement de la conscience politique, de la conscience littéraire, de la conscience philosophique. La guillotine française travaille de façon à piquer

d'honneur le gibet anglais. Partout le progrès est remis en question".[17]

In the 1870s, however, Hugo could no longer attribute regression to Louis-Napoleon. Although the Empire had fallen, France continued to perpetrate atrocities. The experience of the Commune can be seen to have considerably disillusioned Hugo. It is the *guillotine*, testament to man's intentional barbarity, that dominates Quatrevingt-Treize, and it prevails at the end of of the novel, after having decapitated the enlightened hero Gauvain.

His lack of success in international affairs appears to have instilled a deep sense of dejection in Hugo. In 1864, he was already expressing the fear that he was superfluous to his time: "je crois que je commence à être de trop".[18] In 1866, Hugo seems to have believed that he was despised: "je suis si haï que je finis par croire...que je tiens probablement une place gênante dans ce siècle".[19] The isolation suffered by Hugo because of his political undertakings was exacerbated by the passing of many of his friends and contemporaries. Louis Boulanger, Eugène Dévéria, Lamartine and Berlioz were only some of the generation of Romantics who died in the 1860s. Their demise forced Hugo to become more and more aware that he was the only remaining representative of a bygone era. Hugo's anxiety that his power, like that of his colleagues, would soon be definitively ended, can be seen in a letter he wrote to Hetzel in January, 1865: "encore tant de choses à faire et si peu de temps devant moi".[20]

It is clear that political failure and ceaseless isolation contributed to Hugo's growing uncertainty. Moreover, Hugo could not rely upon his family to provide him with solace. His sons, daughter and wife all gave him cause for concern during the 1860s and 1870s. His family worries began with his eldest son, Charles, who deserted Hauteville-House in October 1861 to return to Paris. Hugo intimated his disappointment with his son to his wife: "je regrette, pour tous les motifs à la fois, que Charles soit allé à

Paris. Rien ne pouvait me faire plus de peine".[21] Hugo undoubtedly considered that Charles was being disloyal to him and feared that his absence could be the beginning of the disintegration of his family circle. Hugo's dissatisfaction with his son became profound distress when Charles accused him of employing private detectives to survey him in Paris:

> "mais je tiens à dissiper absolument dans ton esprit ce fantôme grotesque d'une police paternelle autour de toi. Je t'aime avec mes entrailles, ma sollicitude te couve, ma vie t'appartient, mon âme, après ma mort, veillera sur toi, voilà toute ma police".[22]

Although their relationship did, of course, considerably improve, Charles spent most of his father's exile far away from Guernsey, in Paris or in Brussels. When Charles died in 1871, in the midst of the civil turmoil in Paris, Hugo had to endure the unexpected death of his eldest son and he had to take on the responsibility of his two young children.

Hugo did not experience antagonism from his second son but the sorrows which befell François-Victor afflicted him nevertheless. In January, 1865, Emily de Putron, the fiancée of François-Victor, died from tuberculosis. Accompanied by his mother, François-Victor immediately fled from Guernsey, and several years passed before he returned to the island where he had been happy with Emily. It appears that François-Victor believed his beloved would recover and he was so inconsolable that he could not even tolerate attending her funeral.[23] His father was left to fulfil the duty of making a graveside oraison. On the eve of the burial, Hugo recorded his distress in his diary: "mon travail de Gilliatt est interrompu".[24] Although he emphasised the benevolence of God at Emily's funeral, "ton cercueil que... Dieu va remplir d'étoiles!", there is evidence that Hugo could not find any divine consolation with which to comfort his son:[25]

> "mon pauvre Victor, vous le savez peut-être, a été vivement frappé. Il disait avec un accent qui me déchirait: *Je n'avais pas mérité cela*. Hélas, c'est vrai, après douze ans de tant de travail...- à mes côtés - avoir le coeur si profondément percé!"[26]

Hugo was bitterly aware that he could not protect his children and this sense of powerlessness remained. After losing Charles in 1871, Hugo was deprived of his second son in December, 1873. During the completion of Quatrevingt-Treize, François-Victor also died from tuberculosis.

It is perhaps Hugo's daughter Adèle who troubled her father the most profoundly. In December, 1861, Adèle appealed to her father's memories of Léopoldine in an attempt to persuade him to allow her to marry an officer in the British army:

> "tu as dédaigné ce noble jeune homme, et puis un jour tu as avoué au monde entier que tu en étais fier, car cet obscur jeune homme, c'était le Dévouement...
> Je te recommande Albert, en souvenir de Didine."[27]

Forcing this comparison between herself and her elder sister must have revivified her father's grief and it must have made Hugo aware that he could protect Adèle II no more than his beloved Léopoldine.

In June 1863, Adèle II absconded from Hauteville-House, in pursuit of her Englishman and she adamantly refused to return to Guernsey. In 1865, Hugo wrote to François-Victor about his continuing concern for Adèle II, declaring "je n'aurai pas de repos tant que cette pauvre enfant ne sera pas heureuse" and in October, 1868, he stated "voilà cinq ans qu'à cause d'elle j'ai le coeur serré".[28] However, Hugo did not see his daughter again until 1872. Like her uncle Eugène, Adèle was insane and on her return to France, her father committed her to an institution for the mentally ill.

Charles and Adèle II had already left Hauteville-House when Hugo began writing Les Travailleurs de la Mer in June, 1864, so that throughout the period encompassing the composition of the later novels, Hugo was not free from family vexations. L'Homme Qui Rit in particular seems to betray Hugo's solicitude for his wife. Guy Rosa has observed that the figure of Dea is not without connection to Hugo's wife, since both heroine and spouse were blind and the name 'Adèle' contains the letters which form 'Dea'.[29]

One might add that the *dénouement* of L'Homme Qui Rit was written in the house in Brussels where Adèle I was dying. Hugo wrote of the passing of his heroine, the suicide of his hero, and he made Adèle I and Dea share the same minimal consolation. On his arrival in Brussels, Hugo received a note from his wife:

"c'est la fin de mes rêves que de mourir dans tes bras".[20]

It was a wish that Hugo did not fail to grant her, in fiction too, when Dea dies in the arms of Gwynplaine.

If the coincidences between Dea and Adèle I have to some extent been recognised, the association between Déruchette and Hugo's daughter Adèle have not been appreciated. Déruchette's name suggests a young girl who is "out of the hive", and has left the place to which she naturally belongs, just as Adèle II had fled the family home and crossed the sea to be with an Englishman. Considering the selfish, fickle character of Déruchette, Hugo does not seem to have been able to keep his feelings of anger and self-reproach towards his only remaining daughter separate from his fiction.

Hugo's vow "je dédierai à Adèle des livres" suggests his guilty awareness that he had not bestowed the affection upon Adèle that he had upon Léopoldine.[21] Hugo did not only feel culpable because of his inequitable treatment of his two daughters. As an abolitionist, many people had been executed in spite of his efforts, and he had also failed to convince his compatriots of the need for "Conciliation et Réconciliation" so that the Communards would be spared.[22] In his professional career, the immense failure of L'Homme Qui Rit seems to have intensified Hugo's sense of guilt, because he had esteemed the novel so highly: "je pense, en effet, n'avoir rien fait de mieux que L'Homme Qui Rit".[23] When he was conscious of its unpopularity, Hugo chastised his publisher but also himself:

"j'ai voulu abuser du roman, j'ai voulu en faire une épopée. J'ai voulu forcer le lecteur à penser à chaque ligne. De là

une sorte de colère du public contre moi".[34]

By the collapse of the Second Empire, therefore, Hugo had come to have serious misgivings about his abilities as a father, as a convincing spokesman and even as a writer.

Unquestionably, during this period, a major source of culpability in Hugo was his lubricious activity. The enigmatic allusions to illicit affairs in the diaries of the 1860s and 1870s testify to an inexhaustible sexual desire. In his late sixties, Hugo was an elder statesman and represented the figure of a patriarch, but he was also confronted with the unpalatable truth that the satyr was an ineradicable feature of his personality.

It is most remarkable that in the months following his wife's death in the autumn of 1868, Hugo made very frequent visits to prostitutes.[35] Hugo's ardent lust did not even dwindle in his seventies.[36] His passion for a young black woman, Blanche, forced Juliette Drouet to desert him twice. On the second occasion, Hugo regretfully acknowledged that her departure was a "catastrophe".[37] That Hugo feared such a disaster could result from insatiable sexual yearning is indicated in the inscription 'H' in Les Travailleurs de la Mer. The *Durande*, which forms the transversal, is trapped between the two phalluses of the *Douvres* rocks:

> "c'étaient deux pointes verticales, aiguës et recourbées,
> se touchant presque par le sommet" (Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 636).

Whilst the *Douvres* rocks symbolise the aggressive male sexuality suffered by Hugo, it is significant that devastating lewdness is vigorously demonstrated by the female monster who inhabits their deep recesses. Hugo clearly resented his own perpetual yearning for women but there is also the suggestion he believed the female sex to be responsible for destructive physical desire. It is noticeable that it is the virginal hero Gilliatt,

figure of male purity, who puts an end to *la pieuvre* and who rescues the *Durande* from the phallic rocks. Since the ruin of the *Durande* delineates Hugo's initial, he was evidently convinced that his own personal failure was to some extent caused by lust.

Hugo's troubled conscience can be seen to have manifested itself in the persistent nightmares he suffered throughout the 1860s. The diaries of this period testify to the innumerable sleepless nights suffered by Hugo. His "<<trouble-sommeil>> nocturnes" consisted of diverse sounds, voices, nightmares (one dream informed him that Lamartine was mad) and even of ghostly apparitions:[38]

> "nuit. rêve. gravidam vidi, maigre, pâle, l'air égaré, elle a passé rapidement, puis monté et redescendu sans parler à personne, elle a laissé sur une table un papier où il y avait plusieurs signatures entre autres celle d'Abel".[39]

Hugo was clearly convinced of the reality of the nocturnal terrors he endured: "au point du jour, j'ai entendu une voix douce et basse, dire à mon oreille: Victor, cela m'a réveillé. était-ce un rêve?"[40] This rhetorical question indicates that Hugo believed his frightening experiences were not the stuff of fantasy.

It has not been entirely recognised that Hugo permeated his later novels with the forceful presence of nightmare. It is striking that in his biographical work Victor Hugo 1844-70, Hubert Juin makes a detailed catalogue of the "<<trouble-sommeil>> nocturnes" endured by Hugo throughout the 1860s, but he does not appreciate their influence in the later novels. Juin recognises "l'onirisme" (p. 645) of the "livre majeur" (p. 643) of L'Homme Qui Rit, and he defines the precise nature of the phenomenon:

> "qu'est-ce que le rêve? Une lumière dans le noir" (p. 645).

Juin does not appreciate that there is little light in L'Homme Qui Rit. Its *récit* begins in the deepening dusk of a seventeenth century winter's evening and it ends at night, in 'la Mer et la Nuit'. Moreover, L'Homme

Qui Rit is permeated with visions which resemble nightmares, such as *le pendu* and the torture of Hardquanonne in *la cave pénale*. In all of the later novels, the oneiric experience is an immensely injurious one. It is one of nightmare, not of innocuous dream.

Thus far in this introduction, I have endeavoured to demonstrate that during the period in which Hugo composed the later novels, he endured many anxious days and anguished nights. I am therefore going to scrutinise the blackest of Hugo's novels.

Areas which particularly worried Hugo in his own life can be seen to be present in the later novels. In his sexual life, the resentment which Hugo felt towards women can clearly be perceived, since all of the evil monsters in the later novels are female characters and I will make a study of them in Chapter One. Despite the fall of Louis-Napoleon, Hugo observed that French society did not change for the better. The general lack of positive metamorphosis is a prominent concern in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize, and will be discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. I have already referred to the relation between the nightmares suffered by Hugo and the focus on malevolent dreams in the later novels, and I will consider them in Chapter Four.

This thesis will concentrate on the presence of evil in the later novels. I am not going to consider Hugo's philosophy or the nature of evil: I intend to demonstrate that evil is shown to be at work in the cosmos of the later novels, an actuality which I believe has not before been seriously or entirely appreciated by many scholars of Hugo. I am not going to take a wholly different view of evil in Hugo from that taken previously. Chaos, for instance, is depicted as negatively as it is in any of Hugo's earlier works. I intend, rather, to emphasise that Hugo's pessimism takes the form of insisting on the potent force of evil that is

active in the universe.

Critics might argue that Hugo's earlier novels are no less pessimistic than their successors, since benevolent figures like Esméralda in Notre-Dame de Paris are obliterated by the malign forces in their society. However, I would point out that whilst benevolent characters are eradicated in the earlier and later novels, it is only in the earlier novels that the villains endure the same fate. I will discuss this divergence between the treatment of the perpetrators of evil in the earlier and later novels in Chapter Three. Frollo and Javert are expended, but in the later novels their successors the sea, Clubin, Rantaine, Barkilphedro and Lantenac have an enduring maleficent influence. It has never been acknowledged that Barkilphedro is unique among all of the villains in Hugo's novels, because he receives no castigation whatsoever for his evil deeds and indeed, his power relentlessly ascends. There is a leaning towards attributing more might to evil in the later novels and because evil is shown to be such a highly irrepressible force, these works can be seen to be the most pessimistic of all of Hugo's novels.

The prepotency of evil in the later novels causes them to have a predilection towards destruction rather than towards positive creation, and towards stagnation rather than progress. The achievement of evil is therefore chaos, which can be observed in the societies of the later novels, and most vividly in Hugo's depiction of the cosmos. In the furious unleashing of their energies, all of the elements can be seen to be doing chaotic work, but it is the restless waters of the sea which exemplify chaos, and which implement its will most fully. In Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Hugo states "le mal...est chaos" (Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 705). The chaos of the sea is shown to be malign because it involves intransigent anti-order that refuses to be

quantified because it defies reason or logic:

> "dans un phénomène de la mer, tous les phénomènes sont présents" (Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 677).

Marine chaos is a glut of foul matter: "elle...met tous les caecums en communication" (Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 689). It has no respect for the spiritual and seeks to incorporate men and their souls into its swirling, amorphous mass. Chaos is invested with a powerful capacity to transform all it encounters, "elle entreprend le percement du rocher" (Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 689), but it is devoted only to negative change. It is perhaps this utter rejection of positive metamorphosis which is most fiercely reproved by Hugo.

It should be recognised that chaos is distinctly feminine in the later novels: "elle...met tous les caecums en communication". Female sexuality is perhaps assigned to the chaos of the sea because of the physical association between fluids and women. Chaos demonstrates Hugo's conviction in female malignity, because she is utterly opposed to order, stability and positive creation, which, by contrast, can be seen to be masculine concepts. Hugo seems to indicate that the female is to be feared, because she is without pity and is devoted to the barbarity of the primeval past.

The chaos represented by Hugo has some similarities with the ancient Greek definition of chaos, which Adrian Room describes in his Classical Dictionary:

> "Chaos was really where, at any rate according to Hesiod and his *Theogony*, it all started. Chaos was the void from which sprang Gaia, Tartarus, Erebus and Nyx...The name does not really mean 'empty space' and still less the 'confusion' that it means to us today. It means more 'to yawn', 'gape', 'open wide', *chaino*".[41]

As the parent of Tartarus, Erebus and Nyx, the original Chaos was thus responsible for creating much darkness, and Hugo's chaos is also associated with blackness rather than light. Original Chaos brought forth only one

positive creation, Gaia; all of her siblings, who are embodiments of obscurity, can be seen to have negative connotations. Similarly, Hugolian chaos produces more malignity than benevolence in the later novels. The architectural creations of the sea, the "chefs-d'oeuvre" (Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 690), such as the *rochers Douvres*, have been made to destroy men and their ships:

> "on y pouvait entrer. A ses risques et périls...Partout, dans ces caves, se reproduisait, avec les dimensions exagérées de l'océan, cet aspect d'abattoir et de boucherie" (Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 690).

The etymological origin of 'chaos' also has some comparison with Hugo's delineation of this concept. The open mouth suggested by 'to yawn' and 'gape' indicates the omnipresent menace of being devoured and digested by an all-consuming greed. In the later novels, the universe is portrayed as a huge mouth which effortlessly and mercilessly consumes men at will. The cosmic jowls possess limitless obscurity and an insatiable appetite. The human experience of the evil of chaos is to be made helpless and insignificant and to be absorbed into eternal ignominy. I will consider this experience in greater detail in Chapter Five.

Hugo's depiction of chaos does differ from its Classical concept, however. In the later novels, Chaos is not an aimless, unintelligent force which accidentally kills. It has a powerful will and intends to annihilate: "les éléments savent ce qu'ils font et où ils vont" (Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 639)

A principal distinction between Hugo's earlier and later novels, and an additional justification for studying pessimism in the latter, is the new delineation of God in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize. In his work Victor Hugo, Jean-Bertrand Barrère does not acknowledge that the later novels present a much less benevolent God. In Victor Hugo: Philosophe, Jean Maurel also fails to notice this

innovation. In Les Misérables, God is "l'idéal" (Club Français du Livre, XI, p. 395) but in "the sea novel", which was published only three years later, his identity has been considerably metamorphosed.[42] "L'idéal" is no longer indicative of perfection, but of absolute degree. The God of Les Travailleurs de la Mer is responsible for unqualified evil:

> "Orphée, Homère et Hésiode n'ont pu faire que la Chimère;
> Dieu a fait la Pieuvre.
> Quand Dieu veut, il excelle dans l'exécrable"
> (Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 739).

The echo of "excelle" and "exécrable" accentuates that God has infinite power, and he employs it to create terrors such as *la pieuvre*, that have the capacity to defeat all benevolent life:

> "pas un oiseau n'oserait couver, pas un oeuf n'oserait éclore...pas un sein n'oserait allaiter...si l'on songeait aux sinistres patiences embusquées dans l'abîme" (Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 744).

Hugo goes on to admit that if God has any beneficent purpose in producing such evil, he has concealed it even from believers such as himself:

> "le pourquoi de cette volonté est l'effroi du penseur religieux.
> Tous les idéals étant admis, si l'épouvante est un but,
> la pieuvre est un chef-d'oeuvre" (Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 739).

Hugo's belief in God is not in doubt, but neither is his belief that God has determined to bring devilry into existence.

In his later novels, Hugo did not seem able to maintain his representation of God as supreme holiness, the source of benevolence only. His concept of divinity has become fractured and paradoxical. It is no longer diametrically opposed to evil, but comprises it. Like the Voltairean Supreme Being, the emphasis is upon unbounded power which has no regard for frailer, human life. The God of Les Misérables was one to be venerated, but in Les Travailleurs de la Mer he is simply to be feared.

In L'Homme Qui Rit, the negative delineation of God continues. The view of God propounded by Ursus is a deeply pessimistic one:

> "Comme on était en droit de trouver ce monde assez misérable, Dieu a senti où le bât le blessait, il a voulu prouver qu'il savait faire des gens heureux, et il a créé les lords pour donner satisfaction aux philosophes" (L'Homme Qui Rit, Club Français du Livre, XIV, pp. 206-207).

God appears to be sadistic, making the socially superior happier than the poor. Ursus also indicates that God is not the only almighty being in the universe:

> "Dieu est un aveugle; le jour où il a créé le monde, il n'a pas vu que le diable se fourrait dedans" (L'Homme Qui Rit, Club Français du Livre, XIV, p. 215).[43]

This prologue is of course humorous, but it is not without some serious import. The proposition that God is blind suggests that he acts in oblivion and ignorance. The divine tendency must inevitably be towards error rather than progress.

The association between God and evil in L'Homme Qui Rit is considered in Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel. Brombert suspects that God is cunning, feigning benevolence but in reality favouring malignity: "in creating the world (impotence or connivance?) he let the devil be" (p. 203). In L'Homme Qui Rit, the devil's power seems to far exceed that of God. The vigorous activities of the wicked (L'Homme Qui Rit, Club Français du Livre, XIV, p. 170) are "coups de poing sinistres de Satan à Dieu" (L'Homme Qui Rit, Club Français du Livre, XIV, p. 170). God is even maimed by the fallen angel. The power of the defeated force of evil appears to be resurging with a growing intensity.

With a debilitated God, the universe of L'Homme Qui Rit is dark indeed. However, there are more sinister implications to this imbalance in the power between good and evil. Barkilphedro is convinced that he is the progeny of the Devil (L'Homme Qui Rit, Club Français du Livre, XIV, pp. 170-171) and he insists: "car il y a un créateur, le diable ou Dieu, n'importe qui!" (L'Homme Qui Rit, Club Français du Livre, XIV, p. 171).

Since he betrays an utter indifference to benevolence, the unfathomable iniquity of Barkilphedro is accentuated. However, the suggestion that there are not two antithetical powers, but "un créateur" only, is telling. Evil is either produced by an erring, weakened God, or by Satan himself. Its source is of little relevance to Barkilphedro, but it is of pre-eminent importance that evil is in vibrant existence. It is incontrovertible that the benevolent God of Les Misérables does not reign supreme in L'Homme Qui Rit. As he watches Dea decline, Gwynplaine exclaims "Dieu serait un traître" (L'Homme Qui Rit, Club Français du Livre, XIV, p. 382), and, as Victor Brombert comments, "God's responsibility for evil is more than hinted at...Dea dies within the hour".[44]

God is not depicted any more favourably in Quatrevingt-Treize. Brombert has discussed Hugo's relationship with "the supreme author" but the God of Quatrevingt-Treize does not have such a personal involvement with the creative process:[45]

> "le rédacteur énorme et sinistre de ces grandes pages a un nom, Dieu, et un masque, Destin" (Quatrevingt-Treize, Club Français du Livre, XV, p. 380).

The adjective "sinistre" is highly remarkable. God is an interpolator, a usurper who has appropriated another's creation with the intention of exploiting it for his own benefit, and Hugo asserts that "les événements dépensent, les hommes payent" (Quatrevingt-Treize, Club Français du Livre, XV, p. 379). Moreover, this unapproachable editor is duplicitous and hiding behind Fate. Hugo's negative perception of *ananké* is well-known, but here he indicates that misfortune is synonymous with God. By suggesting that God is the true identity of malign Fate, Hugo implies that man has only his Maker to reproach for his ills. Like the sea which destroys its own creations, the God of Quatrevingt-Treize is chaotic, because he persecutes the human beings he has made.

In his later novels, Hugo represents God as a manufacturer of monsters, an unwitting accomplice of the Devil and as a ruthless oppressor. Their universe is imbued with evil and pessimism because no benevolent God presides over it.

Hugo extends the dialectic on the "enigma of evil" far beyond the theological question in his later novels.[46] Besides considering the divine responsibility for wickedness, Hugo demonstrates that the experience of evil is indeed an inescapable one. The maker of the universe may or may not be the Devil, but evil is embedded in the very constituent of which the universe is made:

> "le prodige nocturne universel ne s'accomplit pas sans frottements, et tous les frottements d'une telle machine sont des contusions à la vie. Les frottements de la machine, c'est là ce que nous nommons le Mal" (Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 705).

The physical nature of the universe has been formed so that it is innately malign. To be a concrete entity is to necessarily be forced to suffer evil and the human and inhuman alike are so condemned. Hugo delineates a universe in which evil is not a rare occurrence. The cosmos of the later novels is a vast "machine" and its operation harms all the tangible entities within it. Evil is a fundamental, universal condition.

Hugo seems to be indicating that a devilish spirit would not be able to succeed without the existence of matter. The famous Hugolian indictment of Ce que dit la Bouche d'Ombre, "le mal, c'est la matière", has not been thoroughly examined, but I intend to consider it in detail in this thesis. I shall study the implications of evil for flesh and for inhuman matter.

The clearest possible indication that Hugo intended to portray the deliberate perpetration of evil during this period, is his reading of the works of de Sade. His interest in the Marquis has been entirely ignored, and although Hugo mentions him explicitly in Les Travailleurs de la Mer

(XII, p. 650) and in Quatrevingt-Treize (XV, p. 344), no scholar has ever deemed these references worthy of comment or greater consideration. Indeed, in the 1860s Hugo was indulging in a re-reading of de Sade, whom he had first studied whilst writing Notre-Dame de Paris. Critics have preferred to esteem Hugo as the "reassuring bard of progress, of light, of redemptive love" and de Sade's preoccupations with perversion and torture are plainly incommensurate with such a gentle persona. However, it is de Sade's philosophies which clearly interested Hugo. His anti-Rousseauist conception of nature is one which Hugo recognised and depicted in his later novels:

> "si notre mère commune [la nature] eût voulu cette égalité que le faible s'efforce d'établir, si elle eût vraiment désiré que les propriétés fussent équitablement partagées, pourquoi aurait-elle créé deux classes, une de forts, l'autre de faibles? Les forts s'emparent de tout: voilà le défaut d'équilibre eu égard à l'homme. Les faibles se défendent et pillent le fort: voilà des crimes qui établissent l'équilibre nécessaire à la nature" (L'Histoire de Juliette, pp. 120-121)

By portraying the oppression and even the eradication of the weak by the strong, the later novels therefore testify to the Sadeian "défaut d'équilibre". It is remarkable that de Sade asserts nature's indifference to human existence, "tu ne songes pas que la destruction de mille fois, de dix millions de fois autant d'hommes qu'il y en a sur la surface de la terre, ne coûterait pas une larme à cette nature" and in Les Travailleurs de la Mer. Hugo bears witness to this assertion.[47] L'Archipel de la Manche tells of the human disasters wrought by the sea:

> "c'est en 709, nous l'avons dit, que l'océan a arraché Jersey à la France. Douze paroisses furent englouties" (Les Travailleurs de la mer. Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 524).

Sade's influence is clearly visible in Les Travailleurs de la Mer. The nightmarish quarters of *la Jacressarde* even contain the suggestion of the marquis in their name. Its inhabitants suffer the penury of the slaves in La Nouvelle Justine and the Saint-Malo slum resembles the counterfeiting

factory of the evil Roland.[48] The lethal well at the centre of *la Jacresserde* is the amalgamation of the well and the pitfall in La Nouvelle Justine, which Roland uses as an instrument of execution:

> "quand tu seras morte à la peine, on te jettera dans ce trou que tu vois, à côté du puits, avec soixante ou quatre-vingts autres coquines de ton espèce qui t'attendent et l'on te remplacera par une nouvelle" (p. 300).

The utter indifference towards human life that is demonstrated here by Roland is exactly that shown by the entire society of Saint-Malo. The residents of *la Jacresserde* are left to subsist or die: "qui avait soif, y buvait. Qui avait ennui, s'y noyait" (Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 623).

Sadeian cruelty is visible in each of the later novels. Barkilphedro aspires to be a Sadeian anti-hero:

> "faire subir à Josiane ce qu'on appellerait aujourd'hui une vivisection, l'avoir, toute convulsive, sur sa table d'anatomie, la disséquer, vivante" (L'Homme Qui Rit, Club Français du Livre, XIV, p. 166).

Barkilphedro also anticipates the masochistic relish he would gain from torturing Josiane (L'Homme Qui Rit, Club Français du Livre, XIV, p. 167).

In Quatrevingt-Treize, l'Imânus obtains actual masochistic pleasure from his fatal war wounds (Quatrevingt-Treize, Club Français du Livre, XV, p. 467). Personal, depraved satisfaction is shown to be provided by mass conflict, so there is an incentive for perpetuating it. The atrocities committed in the Terror demonstrate the conviction of the Sadeian anti-heroine Madame Delbène, who fervently advocates the rejection of the Biblical law: "*ne pas faire aux autres ce que nous ne voudrions pas qu'il nous fût fait*".[49]

It has not been acknowledged that Hugo's delineation of some forms of human wickedness is distinctly Sadeian. It is not merely alarming to read of the malevolent deeds that are done; the discovery that they are

gratifying for the criminal, and, more particularly for the victim, is horrifying. Rather than directly entreating his reader to strive towards progress, Hugo continually demonstrates that man continues to fall. Evil is not merely still committed: it is relished. Man appears to have lost the capacity to recognise evil, since some of those who are harmed because of it revel in their injuries.

In the later novels, the sea is the supreme Sadeian tyrant. There are parallels between the sea of Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize and the character Saint-Fond in L'Histoire de Juliette. Like this merciless judge, the sea inflicts many agonies upon defenceless human beings before annihilating them. They have no compassion for human life, arbitrarily condemning men to death and devising the most protracted methods of executing them. Saint-Fond provides himself with innumerable victims, with whom he copulates whilst torturing them.[50] Violence and lust also intermingle in the Hugolian sea. In Quatrevingt-Treize, after engineering the destruction of the *Claymore*, the sea smothers the vessel it has subjugated in kisses:

> "de grosses vagues venaient baiser les plaies béantes de la corvette, baisers redoutables" (Quatrevingt-Treize, Club Français du Livre, XV, p. 306).

The sea is the epitome of hypocrisy, kissing the cuts it has itself made. Sadeian evil vividly demonstrates Hugo's principle "le mal, c'est la matière". Without matter, such intense iniquity could not exist. Evil and pain are inextricable in the Hugolian consciousness. "Avoir du mal" is to be made of flesh, which Sadeian oppressors violate at will.

Sade's view of nature must put a question mark over an optimistic reading of the later novels. Whilst Hugo unceasingly championed progress, it seems that he had nevertheless come to the bitter conclusion that his appeals were unlikely to succeed, since mankind appeared oriented towards

regression, not advancement. The influence of Sade further suggests that Hugo had become conscious that selfishness dominated human beings, who rejected positive creation in favour of destruction because the latter provided them with much more pleasure. Although Myriel and Valjean are venerable characters, the merciless figures of the later novels are more universal.

Several critics, including C.W. Thompson, have emphasised the significance of a note made by Hugo when he was preparing to write L'Homme Qui Rit: "un certain mauvais fond humain est presque irréductible".[51] This quotation also puts a question mark over the God who made men, since they appear to have an intrinsic, immutable capacity for evil within them. The later novels suggest Hugo was convinced that Rousseau's thoughts were far removed from reality, whereas regrettably, those of de Sade were an accurate perception of it.

The tyrant of the sea particularly exercises its sadism upon the *Durande*, the *Matutina* and the *Claymore*. That Hugo made shipwreck a central feature of his three final novels has gone more or less unnoticed, and these disasters deepen the current of pessimism that courses through these works, because every one of these victories of chaos could have been prevented. The *Durande*, the *Matutina* and the *Claymore* are lost not because of technical inadequacies, but because of moral failings. Clubin's greed wrecks the *Durande*, the crimes of the *comprachicos* force them to set sail in dangerous waters and the *Claymore* is demolished by the lethal gun with which it had intended to destroy others. The human heart can be the microcosm of the fathomless well of cosmic evil, but those who replicate the malignity of the cosmos achieve nothing. The conscience, like the broken vessel, is run aground by chaotic, evil forces.

Personal, rather than cosmic responsibility for catastrophe

intensifies throughout the later novels, and culminates in Quatrevingt-Treize. The infamous 'H' formed by the grounded *Durande* already suggested that Hugo himself was experiencing a sense of personal failing. The shipwreck of the *Claymore* differs from its predecessors because it occurs within the vessel:

> "le navire, a, pour ainsi dire, dans le ventre, la foudre prisonnière qui cherche à s'échapper" (Quatrevingt-Treize, Club Français du Livre, XV, p. 302).

The unleashed arm represents the evil of matter: "c'est l'entrée en liberté de la matière" (Quatrevingt-Treize, Club Français du Livre, XV, p. 302). This internal danger assigns the culpability for disaster to men, who have built and installed the cannon and who are also enclosed within the ship. That the crew of the *Claymore* are the authors of their own destruction is emphasised after the cannon has been stopped. Almost the victims of an "exterminateur" (Quatrevingt-Treize, Club Français du Livre, XV, p. 302), the crew nevertheless desire to be the executioners of their opponents. Their enthusiasm for violence indicates the depth of evil within human beings. In Les Misérables, salvation transformed Jean Valjean into a redeemer, but in Quatrevingt-Treize, an antithetical dynamic is in operation. Those who are spared yearn to murder, even though the deed will certainly cost their own lives. The degree of immorality is extreme. The shipwreck of the *Claymore* suggests that men invariably wish to morally fall and fall again.

The tragedy of September 4th, 1843, perhaps caused Hugo to be preoccupied with death upon the waters, but the shipwrecks of the later novels should not be perceived as simply an indication of Hugo's obsession with Léopoldine. It has been suggested that Hugo depicts Léopoldine's drowning as a "baptismal and redemptive" event, but, if this is true, there is nothing positive in his delineation of the shipwrecks in his later

novels.[52]. Death and damnation result from the sinking of the *Durande*, the *Matutina* and the *Claymore*, which can be seen to be magnifications of the boat in which Léopoldine, Charles Vacquerie and their unborn child perished.[53]. They did not deserve to die, unlike the corrupt characters on board the doomed ships of the later novels.

The pessimism of Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize is concretised in their shipwrecks. They demonstrate that evil, not progress, is consistently chosen by a ruthless cosmos but also by men who have a conscience. To experience evil is to be disdained and completely diminished, and engulfment into oblivion is a dominant theme. The sea is a rapacious monster which absorbs ships into its mouth. I intend to defer the sense of evil until the last chapter of this thesis, when I will elaborate upon the various mouths of chaos that are depicted in the later novels.

In this thesis, I will endeavour to illustrate that Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize do not suggest the optimism implied by some of Hugo's earlier novels and indeed by some of his contemporary writings in other genres. I hope to draw attention to the darkness within human beings and within the cosmos, that has not previously been regarded as a major feature of the later novels.

FOOTNOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. Victor Hugo l'Homme et l'Oeuvre, SEDES, Paris, 1984, p. 150. (First Edition Boivin, 1952)

2. See the Epilogue to Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1984, pp. 230-242.

3. In Le Temps de la Contemplation (Flammarion, Paris, 1969), in the chapter 'De la Bouche d'Ombre au Seuil du Gouffre', Gaudon does not appear to attribute great significance to the despair of the exile years: "à partir de là, aucune question ne sera plus résolue, pas même celles du poème. Plongé dans les hésitations, dans les incertitudes, Hugo n'en sortira jamais" (p. 272).

4. Quatrevingt-Treize, Gallimard, Paris, 1979, p. 20 and p. 21 respectively.

5. L'Archipel de la Manche, Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize. Robert Laffont, Paris, 1985, *p. v.*

6. *op. cit., p. v.*

7. For instance, see Jean-Luc Mercié's preface to Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Club Français du Livre edition.

8. Ecrire Hugo, Gallimard, Paris, 1977, p. 212.

9. Indeed, it could be said that both L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize end with an execution and a suicide, since the title 'Barkilphedro a visé l'aigle et a atteint la colombe' is more suggestive of murder than accidental death. Dea seems to have been wilfully put to death, like Gauvain.

10. Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel, p. 242.

11. See Victor Hugo 1844-70, Flammarion, Paris, 1984, p. 534. Hugo personally terms La Grand'Mère "la petite comédie".

12. It should also be recognised that the dramas of Théâtre en Liberté are not totally devoid of sadness. In Les Deux Trouvailles de Gallus, le baron d'Holburg is comparable to his creator. He is "vieux, seul, vaincu, proscrit" (Club Français du Livre, XIV, p. 523), but, unlike Victor Hugo, he has a dutiful daughter who is devoted to his care.

13. Henri Peyre, Victor Hugo, P.U.F., 1972, p. 52.

14. *op. cit.*, p. 51.

15. Jules Allix committed suicide as a result of experiencing the "tables tournantes". Victor Hugo, on the other hand, was neither unhinged by his encounter with the occult nor by the self-destruction of his close friend.
Hugo's sturdy constitution has often been remarked upon. Unfortunately, however, his sons did not inherit it. After the sudden death of Charles, Hugo had to endure losing François-Victor, who died from tuberculosis at the age of 45. It is often emphasised that whilst François-Victor was weak and consumptive, his ageing father was remarkably vigorous. This striking divergence reveals that although Hugo was sufficiently concerned about dying to express his anxieties in his diaries and correspondence, in reality he had enviable physical strength.

16. Hubert Juin, Victor Hugo 1844-70. Flammarion, Paris, 1984, p. 603.

17. Hubert Juin, Victor Hugo 1844-70, Flammarion, Paris, 1984, p. 572.

18. Letter to Auguste Vacquerie, May 22nd, 1864 (Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 1271).

19. Letter to Hetzel, January 16th, 1866 (Club Français du Livre, XIII, p. 752.

20. Hubert Juin, Victor Hugo 1844-70, Flammarion, Paris, 1984, p. 528.

21. Letter to Adèle I, October 29th, 1861 (Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 1131).

22. Letter to Charles, February 25th, 1862 (Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 1149).

23. Letter from Adèle I to Charles, January 15th, 1865 (Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 1284).

24. Diary, January 18th, 1865 (Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 1482).

25. Actes et Paroles II Pendant l'Exil, Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 896).

26. Letter to Paul Meurice, January 31st, 1865 (Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 1286).

27. Letter from Adèle II to Victor Hugo, December 20th, 1861 (Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 1138).

28. Letter to François-Victor, March 15th, 1865 (Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 1289) and Victor Hugo 1844-70, Flammarion, Paris, p. 671.

29. 'Critique et Autocritique dans *L'Homme Qui Rit*', in L'Homme Qui Rit ou la Parole-Monstre de Victor Hugo, SEDES, Paris, 1985, p. 6.

30. Hubert Juin, Victor Hugo 1844-70, Flammarion, Paris, 1984, p. 637.

31. Letter to Adèle I, December 1st, 1863 (Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 1233).

32. Letter to MM. Meurice & Vacquerie, April 28th, 1871 (Club Français du Livre, XV, p. 1286). Hugo says that he is reiterating the need for "Conciliation and Réconciliation", which he had first mentioned in 1869.

33. Letter to Auguste Vacquerie, January 27th, 1869 (Club Français du Livre, XIV, p. 1264).

34. Hubert Juin, Victor Hugo 1844-70, Flammarion, Paris, 1984, p. 675.

35. *op. cit.*, p. 662.

36. According to André Maurois, Hugo's mistresses included Sarah Bernhardt and Judith Gautier, the daughter of his old friend Théophile, and at the time of their liaison, she was married to Catulle Mendès. See Olympio, Hachette, Paris, 1954, p. 517.

37. Olympio, p. 527.

38. Diary of February 15th, 1865 (Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 1485). Jean-Bertrand Barrère draws attention to the nightmares suffered by Hugo during this period in Victor Hugo, *Les écrivains devant Dieu*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1965, pp. 80-83. "C'est surtout après 1860, et, en général, en même temps qu'un travail sur un roman le maintient en état de surexcitation cérébrale, qu'il entend et note des bruits, puis des paroles" (*op. cit.*, p. 82).

39. Diary of March 11th, 1864 (Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 1452).

40. Diary of March 3rd, 1864 (Club Français du Livre, XII, p. 1451).

41. Adrian Room's Classical Dictionary, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1983, p. 91.

42. Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel, p. 156.

43. There is irony in this reflection upon blindness by Ursus. His blind adopted daughter perceives the threat represented by Josiane (L'Homme Qui Rit. Club Français du Livre, XIV, p. 230).

44. Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel, p. 202.

45. *op. cit.*, p. 203.

46. *op. cit.*, p. 203.

47. L'Histoire de Juliette, Oeuvres Complètes du Marquis de Sade, Tome Huitième, Au Cercle du Livre Précieux, Paris, MDCCCCLXVI, footnote to p. 75.

48. La Nouvelle Justine, Oeuvres Complètes du Marquis de Sade, Tome Septième, Cercle du Livre Précieux, Paris, 1966, p. 313.

49. L'Histoire de Juliette, p. 60.

50. L'Histoire de Juliette, pp. 316-317.

51. Professor Thompson refers to this note in his chapter 'A Propos des Lecteurs Anglais de *L'Homme Qui Rit*: Sources et Ressources de Victor Hugo', in L'Homme Qui Rit ou la Parole-Monstre de Victor Hugo, SEDES, Paris, 1985, p. 140. The original note can be seen in Notes Préparatoires, Club Français du Livre, XIV, p. 396.

52. Suzanne Nash, Les Contemplations of Victor Hugo, Princeton University Press, Princeton, U.S.A., 1976, p. 105, *footnote 8.*

53. The theme of personal responsibility for disaster upon the waters has interesting implications for Léopoldine's drowning. Did Hugo wish to exclusively possess her to such an extent that he subconsciously considered her death to be her punishment for marrying?

Chapter One - The Evil Female

The later Hugolian novels not only display evil, but evil which is predominantly committed by females. To continue from the last chapter, it must be remembered that the waters which avidly engulf the *Durande*, the *Matutina* and the *Claymore*, are feminine. In Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo, Charles Baudouin insists "il ne faut jamais oublier l'association mer-mère" when considering Les Travailleurs de la Mer and L'Homme Qui Rit, but Baudouin does not acknowledge that this "mer" is a homicidal mother.[1] Female malignity is manifested in the natural environment of Les Travailleurs de la Mer, in the women of L'Homme Qui Rit and it permeates even inanimate steel and stone in Quatrevingt-Treize. Hugo's last novel delineates the atrocities performed by humankind in political conflicts instigated and dominated by men. Yet it is noticeable that the male tyrannies of the Ancien Régime and the Terror are both concretised in feminine symbols, such as the sea and the monstrous *la Tourgue* and *la guillotine*:[2]

> "et la guillotine avait le droit de dire au donjon:
> -Je suis ta fille" (XV, p. 506).

In these later novels, the evil female exists and she is in a position of considerable strength.

The presence of the virago divorces the later novels from their predecessors. In the earlier novels, the female is sinned against but she tends not to sin. Esméralda is kidnapped, falsely accused, tortured and put to death; Fantine is also cruelly treated by an unjust, principally male society. The landlady of the "gargote" in Les Misérables is malicious, but she is la Thénardier, the wife of an even more villainous husband. It is crimes perpetrated by the female that are focused on in the later novels.

The delineation of motherhood reveals this emerging relationship between the female and evil. In Notre-Dame de Paris and Les Misérables, La

Sachette and Fantine are paragons of constant, maternal devotion. However, in the later novels, the reproduction in which many females, including the sea, are actively involved, is a noxious process which results in more foulness, because they too are foul. The sea in Les Travailleurs de la Mer brings forth monsters that terrorise the rest of creation, and in L'Homme Qui Rit women are anti-mothers who violate children for their own selfish purposes. There is a woman attempting to mother her own children in Quatrevingt-Treize, but she is marginalised and bestialised, not hallowed like Fantine. Maternity is also sometimes prominent by its absence, but even the influence of deceased mothers is somewhat injurious. Benevolence does not, therefore, spring from the majority of mothers in the later novels. Movement is not positive growth to maturity, but is regression towards the black, original uterus, Chaos. This chapter will demonstrate that positive creation issues from the male, who also has the capacity to reproduce, but it is the female who is malign.

The female behaves with spitefulness towards her opposite gender and this is true both of young maidens and decrepit old women. And since women of all ages are hostile, there is an indication that all women are capable of evil and that their injuriousness does not awaken with sexuality or fade with senility. Moreover, women of all social classes are maleficent in the later novels and it is not only in the destruction of the male that the female is interested. There is internecine resentment and hatred between Josiane and Queen Anne, who are like a female Abel and Cain. The violence of the female is innate and gratuitous.

The association between the female and evil is most vividly demonstrated in Hugo's frequent selection of that gender for the monsters in his later novels: *la pieuvre*, Josiane, *la Tourgue* and *la guillotine*. She is a highly tactile species of monster, who yearns for copulation with

the male, but like Lamia, she does not intend him to survive her embrace. The female monsters are reminiscent of Pasiphae, because they desire an unnatural union. The female is monstrous because she is bestial, with trenchant fangs and claws to pierce and tear the flesh of the male. The physically grotesque of the earlier novels has been supplanted by the morally hideous and the female monsters I have listed are exemplary figures of dissoluteness: "'le monstre que tu es dehors, je le suis dedans" (XIV, p. 316).

Unlike her earlier male counterparts, the evil female endures. Han, Frollo and Javert are all eradicated, but the female malefactor does not usually receive such severe castigation. Gilliatt is the slayer of the underwater dragon, but he is killed by her creator the sea, which also extinguishes the life of Gwynplaine. Although she is humbled and defeated, Josiane lives on and her failure to seduce "the monster of her dreams" would not have occurred but for the vindictiveness of the sister whom she detests. It is the intervention of a more powerful evil female that saves Gwynplaine and the Queen's victory over Josiane affirms her autocracy. The preponderance of the malevolent female is surely illustrated by the inexorable guillotine, which is insistently feminised by Hugo and which effortlessly abbreviates the life of the hero at the end of Quatrevingt-Treize. In the earlier novels, the heroes Quasimodo, Enjolras and Jean Valjean all lost their lives, and harmful energies were neutralised. In the later novels, masculine virtue is still obliterated but by an evil female who is allowed to prevail, unscathed and unchecked.

Evil Mothers

In this consideration of the evil female in Hugo's later novels, I will first illustrate that the supreme figure of female good, the mother, does not have a benevolent influence. There are many representations of

motherhood, ranging from the absent mother who disadvantages her child to the female who actively inflicts her monstrous offspring on the world. On a more symbolic plane, Mother Nature enjoys slaughtering her own creatures in Les Travailleurs de la Mer and Mother Earth has produced the *guillotine* in Quatrevingt-Treize: "dans la terre fatale avait germé l'arbre sinistre...cette féroce machine porte-glaive" (XV, p. 506). Only the male can bring forth positive creation in this peculiar vision, and neither he nor his beneficence endures like the female generator of evil.

The woman who is actively engaged in motherhood is entirely absent from Les Travailleurs de la Mer and L'Homme Qui Rit. The evil mother is vividly evoked at the beginning of Les Travailleurs de la Mer. The chapter 'Le BQ de la Rue' contains the account of a sixteenth century execution, in which a woman gave birth whilst being burned at the stake for heresy, but her child was thrown back into the fire. This episode can be interpreted in two ways but either of them testifies to the iniquity of woman.

Firstly, the pregnant woman was one of two sisters being burned with their mother, Perrotine Massy, who had evidently engendered her sin in her daughters. The decision to burn the newborn infant also was thus the determination to extinguish the evil that was being perpetuated throughout the generations of this family. The mother who reproduces her own banefulness is thus introduced and in the same novel the sea and her offspring *la pieuvre* will echo this cycle of evil.

Secondly, however, this scene could be considered to depict an innocent child who was condemned because of its association with the iniquitous. The upholder of the law who casts the babe into the flames is called a "bon catholique" (XII, p. 559), an ironic qualification which indicates that this deed was a severe transgression against Christian doctrine, yet this bailiff was merely exercising the belief of his society,

that no good could possibly come from evil. In L'Homme Qui Rit, there are many malevolent women who cause the suffering and destruction of blameless children.

Either interpretation of this horrifying episode asserts the existence of the virulent mother. Moreover, female vice is compounded because this execution took place during the reign of Mary Tudor who hardly treated her fellow women with leniency. This tale is not a gratuitous historical digression made by Hugo to infuse local colour into his novel, however. Although this extradiegetic analepse occurred more than two and a half centuries before the *récit*, it has a direct bearing upon the fate of Gilliatt. The family of heretics who all perished in the flames in the sixteenth century were French Huguenots (XII, p. 558) and Gilliatt's origin is also suspected to be French (XII, p. 559). The correlation between Gilliatt and the condemned infant is intentional, and Gilliatt's home, le bû de la rue, is echoed in the "bûcher" (XII, p. 558) on which the family are burned.

Hugo's story does not comply with historical records. No such event took place under Hélier Gosselin or Mary I. A woman by the name of Massy was hanged and burned together with her mother and aunt on July 4th, 1617.[3] All three were not accused of heresy, but of witchcraft.[4] In his fictional account in which he condemns the brutal religious intolerance of Tudor society, Hugo could not prevent himself from giving the name of a real witch to the executed women. There is thus the indication that the name Massy had become inextricable from the practice of witchcraft in Hugo's consciousness. Hugo's suppression of the true crime which caused the real Madame Massy and her family to burn suggests that he was not totally unconvinced of the innocence of these women and that they were therefore deserving of their fate. Like Madame Massy, Gilliatt's mother

was reputed to be a witch (XII, p. 559) and she was frequented by the devil (XII, p. 565). The children of a woman of ill renown are damned and Gilliatt is one of them.

To use Genette's terminology, Gilliatt's mother is no more than the subject of an extradiegetic analepse. This hero has no Christian name and by implication no other identity of his own, because his mother was called "Gilliatt" and it was a name attributed to her by her adopted society: "elle avait un nom quelconque dont la prononciation guernesiaise et l'orthographe paysanne avaient fait Gilliatt" (XII, p. 559). The sight, sound or enunciation of this name forces Gilliatt to remember the only person in the world who ever loved him and to be aware that she is gone forever. Gilliatt's mother is therefore a source of absence and loss to him and so Laurent Jenny can write of Gilliatt's scrutiny of his name in the snow:

> "et comme ce mot est désormais celui d'une morte, il n'y lit plus qu'un assemblage gratuit de lettres, au vide duquel il est rivé". [5]

Laurent Jenny also observes that when she raised her son in Guernsey Gilliatt's mother was "cette femme à l'identité confuse".[6] During her lifetime, Gilliatt became associated with the unknown, because of his mother's uncertain origins and after her death he is also bound to the void of the grave to which she belongs. As this critic asserts, Gilliatt is "uni au corps maternel", a body which cannot be extricated from obscurity, out of which it evolved and to which it has returned.[7] Moreover, there is a disjunction between mother and son in Les Travailleurs de la Mer. She does not bequeath him a legacy for himself, but for his wife, so that the alliance between women is strengthened and the importance of a man in the continuity of generations is depreciated. The social appreciation of Gilliatt's mother as an alien and a defunct is reinforced in his own

perception of her. He has no certitude that she was his mother, "il n'avait jamais su au juste ce que lui était la vieille femme qui était morte" (XII, p. 597). His grieving is interrupted by the contemplation of the "trousseau de femme qui était dans la malle de cuir" (XII, p. 597) and there is the inference that he must find a bride upon whom to bestow it. His mother leaves Gilliatt a quest that will cost him dear.

When Déruchette writes the name "Gilliatt" in the snow, Laurent Jenny indicates that "Déruchette refait le geste d'une autre donneuse de nom, sa mère".[8] Déruchette therefore cruelly revivifies the isolated young man's grief for his dead mother and reminds him that he embodies the past, so that he subsequently has no relation to the present or the future. Gilliatt's mother loved him whilst she was alive, but her rôle is ultimately that of a "donneuse de nom" and it is a name that has many negative, damaging connotations for her son.

In L'Homme Qui Rit, the recollection of their parentage by Gwynplaine and Dea is less significant than that of Gilliatt. Gwynplaine's memory of his childhood compares to the experience of the infant Astyanax: "Gwynplaine n'avait souvenir de son enfance que comme d'un passage de démons sur son berceau" (XIV, p. 192). The only adults with whom Gwynplaine associates his childhood are the *comprachicos* "<<les *achète-petits*>>", (XIV, p. 45), who voyage in the Matutina. This ship has an ironic name for the carrier of those who have molested children, because it could be interpreted as 'good little mother':

> "Matuta was the name of two Roman goddesses...the exact root of Matuta's own name has not been precisely established. Possibilities are *manus*, 'good', *mater*, 'mother' (she was often called Mater Matuta)".[9]

However, Gwynplaine's maternal lineage is not without some sinister connotations. His mother was "la fille d'un régicide, Ann Bradshaw" (XIV, p. 142), so she is tainted with the blood of execution and her offspring

are rendered the automatic target for the vengeance of future monarchs. The most disquieting feature of Gwynplaine's mother, however, is her forename, Ann, which appears only briefly before that of "la duchesse Josiane". In her article 'Figures mythiques de la femme dans L'Homme Qui Rit', Simone Vierne accentuates the proximity between the two names and suggests that it indicates a close relationship between the two women: "on ne peut s'empêcher de faire de rapprochement, à quelques lignes de distance, d'autant que Josiane doit depuis son enfance devenir 'Clancharlie' en épousant Dirry-Moir".[10] That Hugo determined to connect the mother of his hero to the female monster is difficult to refute. "Ann Bradshaw" is immediately succeeded by the parenthesis "on précisait le nom". Ann Bradshaw is innocently associated with bloodshed because of her father's actions, but Josiane delights in the sanguinary spectacle of the boxing match. The liaison between Ann and Josiane reinforces the predestination of the meeting between the son of Clancharlie and the duchess, but there is nevertheless something disquieting about the relation between the mother of the hero and the monster. A parallel can be drawn between Gwynplaine's predestined involvement with Josiane, and Gilliatt's mother bequeathing him the quest which involves Déruchette and ultimately la pieuvre. The futility of political violence is also suggested by Gwynplaine's mother, because her regicide father gave her the name of a future queen.

Like Gwynplaine, Dea has a very indistinct memory of her mother, but one which signifies death and the void: "elle se rappelait sa mère comme une chose froide" (XIV, p. 192). The society of L'Homme Qui Rit does not allow benevolent motherhood to exist and Dea's mother, who is still breast-feeding her child, is utterly abandoned and dies in the snow. Merciless indifference predominates in late Stuart England, not maternal caring and

compassion. And if motherhood has all the appearance of a prohibited profession in L'Homme Qui Rit, in Quatrevingt-Treize, Gauvain is another hero not raised by his mother, because she is dead, like his father (XV, p. 350). So whilst none of the virtuous young characters in the later novels actually has an evil mother, nevertheless they do not benefit from any kindly maternal influence.

Quatrevingt-Treize does, however, include a living human mother, the first in a novel since Fantine in Les Misérables, which was published twelve years before in 1862. La Sachette, Fantine, Dea's mother and Michelle Fléchard are all victims of the ruthless societies in which they live and their children (the majority of whom are girls) suffer further because their own capacity for parenthood is taken away from them. The cruelty of the France of 1793 is betrayed by the isolation of Michelle Fléchard, who has been deprived of all the kinsmen who could have protected her and her children:

> "- mon père était infirme et ne pouvait travailler à cause qu'il avait reçu des coups de bâton que le seigneur...lui avait fait donner...Mon grand'père était huguenot. M. le curé l'a fait envoyer aux galères...Le père de mon mari était un faux-saulnier. Le roi l'a fait pendre" (XV, p. 291).

The defencelessness of this mother is the responsibility not only of the Terror, but also of the previous male tyranny, the Ancien Régime. However, although Fantine and Michelle Fléchard both suffer because of wealthier and more powerful men, the maternity embodied by "la Flécharde" is quite distinct from that of her hallowed predecessors in Hugo's novels. When she is dying, Jean Valjean reflects that Fantine's torments compare with those of Christ: "je priais le martyr qui est là-haut. Et il ajouta dans sa pensée:- Pour la martyre qui est ici-bas" (XI, p. 189). Valjean later confirms Cosette's sanctification of her mother: "ma mère dans sa vie doit avoir touché à la sainteté. Par le martyre, répondit Jean Valjean" (XI,

p. 640). However, in Quatrevingt-Treize, motherhood is no longer the means by which a woman achieves saintliness. Indeed, Michelle Fléchard has been divested of her humanity because she is a mother. When, like Fantine, she has been deprived of her offspring and has been close to death, she is not hallowed but innately bestial: "l'instinct maternel est divinement animal. La mère n'est plus femme, elle est femelle" (XV, p. 415).[11] The division between the two representations of motherhood is deep. Whilst Fantine is simply 'divine', Michelle Fléchard is supremely bestial, "divinement animal".

Motherhood still absolves the carnality of woman, but she is transformed into a beast, not an angel. Maternity has therefore degenerated from the approximation of Christ to the highest form of animality. Michelle Fléchard's children are ultimately returned to her, but it is the saving of the future generation which is of predominant importance, not the rôle that she performs. To conclude, in these novels the human mother who is absent is not entirely innocuous and where, as in Quatrevingt-Treize, she is present, she is a wild beast.

The injuriousness of the absent mothers is compounded by the malignity of many disparate females who are actively inolved in procreation and creation. The uncertainty and indistinctness which the concept of their mother evoked for Gwynplaine, Dea and Gilliatt suggests the chaos from which the entire universe was made. Hugo's negative representation of the female in the later novels adheres to the Classical view of the original womb as archaic confusion and oblivion. However, mothers in the later novels are not solely negative because they are reminiscent of primeval disorder. Chaos was "the void from which sprang Gaia" but it also brought forth "Tartarus, Erebus and Nyx".[12] Chaos was therefore an odious mass which yielded other vexations and the later novels also depict mothers who

beget new banes to inflict upon the world. Professor Seebacher points out the femininity that Hugo ascribed to chaos in 1854-55: "le chaos, placenta de l'univers".[12] In 1856, in Ce que dit la Bouche d'Ombre, Hugo proposes that a tainted source is capable of producing only virulence:

"le mal, c'est la matière. Arbre noir, fatal fruit".[13]

The transition from "noir" to "fatal" suggests that the progeny of such a mother is an intensification of her evil. This image from Ce que dit la Bouche d'Ombre also appertains to the hanged man in L'Homme Qui Rit.[14] We have seen that he appears to be the gruesome creation of the gallows.

Les Travailleurs de la Mer presents a series of natural phenomena as evil mothers. The sea in the later novels does not selflessly provide like a mother, which Charles Baudouin's connection "mer-mère", would suggest. In his reflection upon the sea in Les Structures Anthroplogiques de l'Imaginaire, Gilbert Durand expands upon Baudouin's interpretation of the sea as a mother. Durand defines "ces eaux mères" as "les menstrues".[15] Yet the blood which exudes from the seascape of Les Travailleurs de la Mer is not life-giving menstrual fluid, but the spilth produced by a murderer: "on croyait voir le mur pas essuyé d'une chambre d'assassinat...En de certains endroits ce carnage paraissait ruisseler encore, la muraille était mouillée, et il semblait impossible d'y appuyer le doigt sans le retirer sanglant" (XII, pp. 675-676).

When Gilliatt enters into the subterranean grottoes, Hugo also comments: "partout, dans ces caves, se reproduisait, avec les dimensions exagérées de l'océan, cet aspect d'abattoir et de boucherie étrangement empreint dans l'entre-deux des Douvres" (XII, p. 690). The sea is thus associated with killing and not with the giving of life. She is an evil mother because she creates more butchers, who are also of the female gender. Hugo states "Océan, c'est Ceto" (XII, p. 723), and this monstrous

mother is defined by Adrian Room in his Classical Dictionary:

> "Ceto was the monster-daughter of Pontus (the sea) and Gaia (the land). She married her brother Phorcys and bore him the Graiae and the Gorgons. Her name means 'whale', 'sea-monster', from *cetos*, although another theory points to *keimai*, 'to lie', 'to be situated', as a possible source, referring to the sunken rocks in the sea that lie in wait like monsters".[17]

The latter part of this commentary particularly applies to the *Douvres* and the octopus is the concretisation of Ceto's malevolence, because it is the sea monster that her name suggests. *La pieuvre* is the very "Méduse" (XII, p. 742), who was one of the Gorgons, so her sisters must lurk elsewhere in their mother's waters which shelter monsters but imperil men.

The female monster in L'Homme Qui Rit is also the daughter of the sea: "son origine, c'était la bâtardise et l'océan" (XIV, p. 145).[18] Josiane is solid, "Josiane, c'était la chair" (XIV, p. 144), but beneath her bounteous flesh is the divisive will of the waves: "elle avait en elle de la vague, du hasard, de la seigneurie, et de la tempête" (XIV, p. 145). Josiane is thus the executor on land of all the fury and chaos that claimed the lives of those on board the *Matutina*.

The storm in Les Travailleurs de la Mer is another female in the cosmos that produces virulent creations. It is depicted as a pregnant female, "sorte de foetus hideux dans le ventre de la tempête" (XII, pp. 726-727). The offspring that she brings forth is so dedicated to the destruction of Gilliatt that it is prepared to kill itself in the process: "trois ou quatre larges araignées de pluie s'écrasèrent autour de lui sur la roche" (XII, p. 727). This mother storm is not promoting life but annihilating that which already exists. As the cloud bursts, the storm's labour compares with more sickness and the spread of poison than the delivery of new life: "la crevasse devint comme une bouche ouverte pleine de pluie, et le vomissement de la tempête commença" (XII, p. 727). This

cloudburst recalls the opening of Pandora's box:

> "averse, ouragan, fulgurations, fulminations, vagues jusqu'aux nuages, écume, détonations, torsions frénétiques, cris, rauquements, sifflements, tout à la fois. Déchaînement de monstres" (XII, p. 727).

The rage in the sky supplies the antithesis to vivifying waters. Moreover, this evil mother casts down her wrath upon two benevolent and defenceless mothers. The first is the *Durande*, from which Gilliatt rescued Lethierry's revolutionary engine, "le ventre de la *Durande* s'ouvrit" (XII, p. 711), and the second is "la panse", "en quelques coups de mer, la panse serait éventrée" (XII, p. 732), which will act like a substitute womb and carry the engine to Guernsey.

Gilliatt is attacked from above and below by the vicious progeniture of evil females. The storm tipped the bitter fruits of its womb onto Gilliatt's head, but the sea's bloodthirsty offspring seizes him beneath the waves. Its uterine shape renders the octopus the symbol of the female's capacity to manufacture evil: "cet épouvantable sac, qui est un monstre" (XII, p. 742). Indeed, the octopus represents the universal womb, which seems to provide more plagues than blessings: "le Possible est une matrice formidable. Le mystère se concrète en monstres" (XII, p. 742). *La pieuvre* not only has the power to reproduce its own banefulness and to kill other species. Its mere existence is sufficient to prevent the continuation of all life:

> "pas un oiseau n'oserait couver, pas un oeuf n'oserait éclore, pas une fleur n'oserait s'ouvrir, pas un sein n'oserait allaiter, pas un coeur n'oserait aimer, pas un esprit n'oserait s'envoler, si l'on songeait aux sinistres patiences embusquées dans l'abîme" (XII, p. 744).

The existence of this female and her capacity to procreate is thus a danger to all of creation. Despite its shape, however, Hugo does not depict the octopus as a mother. Its only rôle seems to be that of an indiscriminate

killer. *La pieuvre* "a un seul orifice au centre de son rayonnement" (XII, p. 741). She is defined by a gaping cavity, but it is not a vagina; it is only a space which both eats and excretes, so the creature is allowed no beneficial, creative function. She is synonymous with death. *La pieuvre* signifies ingestion and destruction; the entrance to her body is the exit to death for any passing being. Her mouth which eats creatures is a filthy tomb for them, because it is also the anus which rejects their remains: "cet hiatus unique, est-ce l'anus? est-ce la bouche? C'est les deux" (XII, pp. 741-742). The void at the centre of the octopus is a confusion, where all natural divisions have been dissolved, and even those as far apart as the beginning and the ending are indistinct from one another in her murkiness. *La pieuvre* is the embodiment of primeval chaos. Her monstrous, insatiable hollow could engulf all living species. In Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Hugo portrays the malign females in the cosmos who have no regard for the children of others and whose own progeniture is born solely to inflict injury and devastation. These evil mothers menace the future, because they are devoted to returning the universe to the oblivion in which it was originally imprisoned.

In his analysis of the femininity of 'L'Echafaud' (Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit), Laurent Jenny concludes "c'est la mise en scène d'un néant par où fuit la vie".[19] This final statement could equally apply to the mouth of the octopus. Since she has only one orifice, the void at her centre must constitute her pudendum also. *La pieuvre* is a nightmarish representation of the female sexual organ, which seems condemned in the Hugolian consciousness because of its form. At its very midst there is emptiness, connoting oblivion and thus moral depravity. Rather than supply life, the female prefers to reclaim it, in the later novels.

The most disturbing exponent of motherhood appears after the evil,

chaotic womb, the "épouvantable sac", has been destroyed. The sea is a malicious female who has reproduced a monster, but nature creates life and then arbitrarily extinguishes it: "la nature, mère quand bon lui semble, bourreau quand il lui plaît" (XII, p. 751). The derivation of pleasure from destruction infers that nature is sadistic and indulges in this latter practice much more frequently than in the former positive one. There are females within the cosmos who multiply their own evil, but the mother of them all abuses her power of giving life by summarily abbreviating it. Fertility exists, but there is no kindly maternity. Nature's gratification in obliterating her own creatures establishes that she too is not devoted to progress.

In Les Structures Anthropologiques de l'Imaginaire, Gilbert Durand cites Germaine Dieterlen, and her representation of "la Kali des Bambara, Mousso-Koroni" could indeed apply to the evil mothers in Les Travailleurs de la Mer: "elle symbolise, tout ce qui s'oppose à la lumière: obscurité, nuit, sorcellerie. Elle est aussi, l'image de la rébellion, du désordre, de l'impureté...".[20] The goddess Kali is particularly like the sea in Les Travailleurs de la Mer because she is a "divinité sanguinaire dont les temples ressemblent aujourd'hui à des abattoirs".[21] Durand concludes that Kali "pollue tout ce qu'elle touche et introduit le mal dans l'univers, c'est-à-dire la souffrance et la mort".[22] Like Kali, the mothers in the cosmos of Les Travailleurs de la Mer are the inversions of maternity, because they propagate death.

In his examination of the endings of Les Travailleurs de la Mer and L'Homme Qui Rit, Charles Baudouin states that "la mort du héros est identique à son retour au sein maternel", but this gentle, consoling, positive interpretation wholly disregards Hugo's delineation of the sea in his later novels.[23] Baudouin's reading is confined to the homophone "mer-

mère" and he does not seek to concern himself with the semantics of the texts in which this 'mother' is presented as a virago. The "sein" to which Gilliatt and Gwynplaine return is the poisonous breast of Ceto, and they go to her because they know that she will kill them. Baudouin recognises that both novels end on the word "mer" but it is the cruelty of the sea which Hugo emphasises, not its motherly beneficence.[24] In Les Travailleurs de la Mer and L'Homme Qui Rit, Hugo exploits in fact the homophony in 'mer' and 'mère' to indicate that the latter's positive connotations have no relation to the former.

In L'Homme Qui Rit, the exponents of negative motherhood belong to human society rather than to the realm of the elements and nature. At the beginning of the novel, energies are immediately shown to be directed against mothers and their unborn children. The womb is no longer the monster that it was in the previous novel; in L'Homme Qui Rit, it is monstrously violated. Children cannot even rely upon being secure within the womb, because they are extracted from it: "la Chine est un bocal de foetus" (XIV, p. 48).[25] This movement against natural human development exists because of the desire for the unnatural manufacture of human beings. Human reproduction is perverse in L'Homme Qui Rit because wealthy aristocratic women indulge in creation after children are born. They have the children of others literally 're-produced' by the *comprachicos*.

Infants are distorted in order that their repellent deformities will, by contrast, embellish the courtiers who commissioned them. "A quoi bon être belle, si l'on n'a pas un magot?" (XIV, p. 146) suggests that female beauty necessitates the profanity of the *comprachicos*' industry. These women are anti-mothers, who have a purely egotistical motive for stunting children's growth. However, desiring to profit from children is not the preserve of noblewomen only. Poor women do not pity Gwynplaine but covet

his hideousness and some even beat their children to punish them for not resembling him:

> "des mères baladines et danseuses de corde, qui avaient de jolis enfants, les regardaient avec colère en montrant Gwynplaine et en disant: <<Quel dommage que tu n'aies pas une figure comme cela!>> Quelques-unes battaient leurs petits de fureur de les trouver beaux" (XIV, p. 219).

Women in L'Homme Qui Rit are highly materialistic. Although they have attractive children of their own, these poor women have no maternal devotion. They are no more moral than their socially superior sisters: "plus d'une, si elle eût su le secret, eût arrangé son fils 'à la Gwynplaine'. Une tête d'ange qui ne rapporte rien ne vaut pas une face de diable lucrative" (XIV, p. 219). Whilst the remains of benevolent motherhood lie in the snow, the anti-mothers prey on children in all strata of society. The reproductive females in the later novels are the antithesis to the selflessness of Fantine because they have no compassion at all.

After the evil mothers and the anti-mothers, energies in Quatrevingt-Treize are once more in operation against a poor woman trying to tend her children and they split the family unit. Quatrevingt-Treize also exhibits mothers whose issue is baneful. 'En Vendée', Hugo informs us, "les femmes grosses servaient d'espions" (XV, p. 406).[26] These nocturnal spies appear not to be pregnant with new human beings, but with treachery, so that they will increase mistrust and division in France when they are delivered.

Lantenac declares that France has yielded the merciless *guillotine*, product of her abominable union with Robespierre:

> "-il y avait une fois un roi et une reine; le roi, c'était le roi; la reine, c'était la France. On a tranché la tête au roi et marié la reine à Robespierre; ce monsieur et cette dame ont eu une fille qu'on nomme la guillotine, et avec laquelle il paraît que je ferai connaissance demain matin. J'en serai charmé" (XV, p. 491).

Lantenac delineates the *guillotine* as the evil female produced by Robespierre and revolutionary France. The parody of the fairy tale, "il y avait une fois", conveys Lantenac's disdain for the *guillotine* and the political system that devised it. His satire is also a euphemism for the lethal machine, which is altogether more apocalyptic. As Gauvain awaits execution, however, Hugo defines the *guillotine* not as the product of its contemporary time, but as the direct descendant of the past:

> "et la guillotine avait le droit de dire au donjon:
> -Je suis ta fille" (XV, p. 506).

This is not an intimation of kinship, but the assertion of ascendancy over decline. The *guillotine* is an evil daughter who exterminates the power to whom she owes her existence: "et en même temps le donjon, car ces choses fatales vivent d'une vie obscure, se sentait tué par elle" (XV, p. 506). In his analysis of the *guillotine* as the symbol of '93', Sandy Petrey avers that "the present is the deformed offspring of the past".27. The *guillotine* is the contemporary butcher yet only because it has inherited the will to destroy from the preceding brutal era. Although it has an ethos which is diametrically opposed to that of the feudal government of the past, the Terror is no more than the intensification of its ruthlessness, so that progress is not forthcoming. This transition between eras recalls the chapter 'Ceci tuera cela' in Notre-Dame de Paris, but in Quatrevingt-Treize the modern age is represented by a machine which literally kills, and what is more, its power is invincible.

The final evil mother depicted in Quatrevingt-Treize is the earth. In Ce que dit la Bouche d'Ombre, "arbre noir" was responsible for the proliferation of malevolence, but in Quatrevingt-Treize, the soil in which all things grow has become pestiferous:

> "dans la terre fatale avait germé l'arbre sinistre.
> De cette terre, arrosée de tant de sueurs, de tant
> de larmes, de tant de sang, de cette terre où avaient

> été creusées tant de fosses, tant de tombes, tant de cavernes, tant d'embûches, de cette terre où avait pourri toutes les espèces de morts faits par toutes les espèces de tyrannies, de cette terre superposée à tant d'abîmes, et où avaient été enfouis tant de forfaits, semences affreuses, de cette terre profonde, était sortie, au jour marqué, cette inconnue, cette vengeresse, cette féroce machine porte-glaive, et 93 avait dit au vieux monde:
> -Me voilà" (XV, p. 506).

The abstract "arbre noir" has become the horrifyingly concrete *guillotine*, "l'arbre sinistre" of 1793. The earth from which it sprang has been poisoned by the society of men that rages above it, and it is also destabilised by the "abîmes" beneath it. The potential for more than one "arbre noir" to grow from this envenomed soil is very great. In the later novels, the evil mother is a constant and ascendant presence, transferring from the remote chaos of the sea to the society of man. At the end of Quatrevingt-Treize, the possibility of good arising in human civilisation appears minimal.

Benevolent, valuable reproduction is achieved by the male in the later novels. It is Lethierry who invents the steamer which enriches the entire island of Guernsey. He is "le père" of the *Durande*, whilst he is but "l'oncle" of Déruchette (XII, p. 586). It is Gilliatt who saves the revolutionary engine and his rescue of it is described in terms of a surgeon performing an emergency Caesarean section (XII, p. 733).[29] The young, virginal hero restores the embryo of progress to its creator, an ageing bachelor. Once the *Durande* is returned to the harbour of St. Sampson, it is her phallic chimney that proclaims her rebirth. The funnel thus announces that it was masculine ingenuity and fortitude which reclaimed the work of progress from the grasp of chaos, demonstrating that civilisation is dependent upon the male.

In L'Homme Qui Rit, the hero himself is pregnant with a gift for his society. In his chapter 'Compétence Narrative et Nom Propre' in L'Homme

Qui Rit ou la Parole-Monstre de Victor Hugo, M. Grimaud deliberates upon the possible pronunciation of Gwynplaine's name: "la première - gouine - ayant le sens de 'femme de mauvaise vie' comme dans 'Forces des Choses' (Châtiments, VII, 12, vers 33) - paraît *être* une allusion obscène à la bouche fendue de Gwynplaine (*bucca* = *vagina*)".[29] There is unequivocally deep ironic resonance in the appellation of a male virgin as "une femme de mauvaise vie", particularly since there is a Celtic saint, Gwyn, and because 'gwyn' means 'white' in Welsh.[30] Gwynplaine's positive bestowal is also of a vocal nature, because it is his speech in the House of Lords. This "femme de mauvaise vie" with a gaping mouth brings forth enlightenment and compassion, but like the prophetess Cassandra, Gwynplaine is unheeded. Gwynplaine attempts to bring good into the world, but his generosity is rejected and ridiculed.

Quatrevingt-Treize continues with the concept that good issues from the male. Cimourdain totally excludes the involvement of a woman from the development of his protégé, whom he believes he alone has created: "Gauvain était en Vendée le point d'appui de la révolution, et c'était lui, Cimourdain, qui avait fait cette colonne à la république" (XV, pp. 411-412). This proud phallic symbol recalls Lethierry's judgment of the funnel of his steamer (XII, p. 764) and the columns in both novels are monuments proclaiming masculine virility and achievement. Cimourdain views the beginning of existence as the moment of conversion to the Revolutionary cause, but Gauvain confirms his mentor's assessment of his life when he is in his condemned cell: "j'existe par vous...Vous m'avez fait propre, comme homme, à la vie terrestre, et, comme âme, à la vie céleste...O mon maître, je vous remercie. C'est vous qui m'avez créé" (XV, p. 501). Unfortunately and ironically for Gauvain, his creator is also his executioner. Gauvain addresses his tribute to someone who had just watched over him with the

tenderness of a mother (XV, p. 500), a relationship recalling that of Quasimodo and Frollo, yet this sole individual who is responsible for his creation has nevertheless sentenced him to death. Cimourdain has given exceptional life, but he takes it away and subsequently needs to destroy himself, a series of events which promotes adherence to "l'absolu humain" rather than to the political "l'absolu révolutionnaire" (XV, p. 483). Cimourdain's creative capacity is absorbed by his greater commitment to genocide.

Although the male is the bringer of good in the later novels, it is only Gilliatt who bestows something concrete and enduring. From Les Travailleurs de la Mer to Quatrevingt-Treize, the negative, reactionary forces that oppose the realisation of the beneficial male potential have increased in strength, and are so powerful in the final novel that the luminary child and his creator are swept away.

To counter the perpetuation of evil by the female and to reinforce the masculinity of benevolent reproduction, Hugo insists that the infinite is the preserve of the male: "la vie, qui est la femelle, s'accouplait avec l'infini, qui est le mâle" (XII, p. 790). At the end of Les Travailleurs de la Mer, therefore, the female is connected to transience, whereas her opposite gender possesses the higher realm of the eternal. However, not one of the later novels substantiates this assertion that the infinite is masculine. Whilst the female of all species pursues the male so that he will impregnate her, Gilliatt surrenders his life to the macrocosmic evil mother, the sea. The end of L'Homme Qui Rit ironically depicts its hero sailing towards Gravesend (XIV, p. 381), a place which augurs hope in its name, yet Gwynplaine will nevertheless hurl himself into the Thames, which will be his tomb. There is no 'end to the grave' for Gwynplaine, and it is the odious sea that remains omnipotent at the end of L'Homme Qui Rit.

Gauvain is the only hero not to be eradicated by the sea, but his life is nevertheless terminated by a malevolent female, the inexorable *guillotine*, which remains unweakened like the sea. The end of a novel is a metaphor for the end of life, so the endings of the later novels should demonstrate the connection between the infinite and the male, but they assert the sovereignty of the evil female, who continues to flourish after extinguishing the life of the hero. 'The masculine infinite' is a hope but not a reality, in the later novels. Only the male has the potential to generate good, but the female who performs evil has real and lasting power. The theme of reproduction in the later novels considerably adds to their pessimism.

The Malevolence of Elderly Women and Young Girls

The women with the capacity to procreate are not the only ones who are shown to be malign in the later novels. Elderly women and young girls are not too frail or too innocent to be antagonistic towards the male. These females are too old or too immature to bear children, so that they have no need of the male, but they are spiteful towards him nevertheless. The proliferation of evil mothers in the cosmos is compounded by wicked young maidens, as well as by unkind women who are the antithesis to caring grandmothers.

In Les Travailleurs de la Mer, it is "une bonne vieille chineuse" (XII, p. 599) who first perceives Gilliatt's love for Déruchette. The old woman has great visual acuity, but she uses her acquired knowledge to gain malicious self-satisfaction. The physical degeneration "en sa décrépitude mendiante" (XII, p. 599) portends that Gilliatt's aspiration will not come to fruition. Her lack of teeth reinforces her apparent debility, but she wounds with her tongue: "en passant près de Gilliatt 'faisant sa faction', elle dirigea de son côté toute la quantité de sourire dont elle était

encore capable, et grommela entre ses gencives: *ça chauffe*" (XII, p. 599). She does not approach Gilliatt to sell her merchandise, but to shatter his privacy and to inform him that his affection for Déruchette is no longer his personal property only. Her sardonic interjection is an attempt to deride and sully Gilliatt's feelings. He does not understand her metaphor, (XII, p. 599), and his inability to comprehend her language emphasises his ineffectiveness in the subject of romance to which she refers. Before she speaks, Hugo asks "était-elle...restée assez jeune pour se rappeler quelque chose des belles années, et savait-elle encore, dans son hiver et dans sa nuit, ce que c'est que l'aube?" (XII, p. 599). However, if she does appreciate "ce que c'est que l'aube" her response is to darken it with "son hiver" and "sa nuit". She is an old harridan who embarrasses and intimidates Gilliatt, further distancing him from the female sex. The shy, virginal youth who is afraid of women receives no aid or encouragement from this peddlar, who is old enough to be his mother or grandmother. The cessation of her sexual activity mirrors the non-beginning of his. Post-sexual woman is shown to be no less hostile to the hero than sexually active females in Les Travailleurs de la Mer. The demolition of Gilliatt's privacy by this hag prefigures the destruction of his life by the most ancient, malevolent female, the sea.

The predecessor of this cruel old woman is found in Le Dernier Jour d'Un Condamné. The condemned man is subject to a terrifying nightmare, in which "une petite vieille" presses her teeth into his hand:[31]

> "alors, elle...a soufflé la bougie avec un souffle glacé. Au même moment j'ai senti trois dents aiguës s'imprimer sur ma main, dans les ténèbres".[32]

This beldam had snuffed out the flickering symbol of life. She is the embodiment of the *guillotine*, the all too tangible object of destruction on view to his conscious mind.

In his condemned cell, Gauvain also dreams that personified death touches him: "-je rêvais que la mort me baisait la main" (XV, p. 501).[33] An old woman is the symbol of execution. In the *argot* of the forçats, in Le Dernier Jour d'Un Condamné, "la veuve" signifies the gallows: "mon père a épousé la veuve".[34] In Quatrevingt-Treize, Danton's name for the *guillotine* is also "cette veuve" (XV, p. 359). The *guillotine* therefore acquires the identity it awarded to Marie-Antoinette and many others. There is malice and spite in widow gallows and widow *guillotine*, because they make countless other women widows. Throughout Hugo's lifetime, the old, shrivelled woman remained the figure of impending, gruesome and unjust death.

An adolescent girl also disquiets the subject of Le Dernier Jour d'Un Condamné. Hoping for something to brighten the oppressive gloom of the prison hospital, he perceives "la voix pure, fraîche, veloutée, d'une jeune fille de quinze ans".[35] However, this girl's singing suggests to the condemned man that there is no pity for him in heaven and that hoping for an amelioration to his attention is futile. She fills his ears with a heartless parody of his own desperate situation:

> "J'li ferai danser une danse,
> Lirlonfa malurette,
> Où il n'y a pas de plancher,
> Lirlonfa maluré".[36]

The brutal indifference of the executioner resounds from the lips of innocence and inexperience. Like her song, the youth of the maiden is deceptive and the condemned man infers that her parlance indicates that she has lost her innocence: "gracieuse transition de la voix d'enfant à la voix de femme!" [37] This young grisette informs her listener that he has been transformed from a citizen into a convict, and that his death is very near. The condemned man reflects thus upon hearing the girl's song: "vous y cueillez une jolie fleur, vous la respirez: elle pue".[38] This is a

condemnation indeed, but this girl is shown to have greater allegiance to "le démon" than "le bon Dieu" for electing to sing such a refrain beneath the window of a cell outside Bicêtre.[39] In the experience of the condemned man, therefore, the young girl outside the prison and the old hag within his subconscious are females who come not to heal but to inflame his torments.

The exhibition of malevolence harboured by a girl towards her opposite gender re-emerges in L'Homme Qui Rit. There is no figure displaying active antagonism like the singer jeering the condemned man, but the malice suggested is more sinister, partly because its subject is younger still: "une fille qui laisse pendre et traîner son lacet sur un dossier de fauteuil dessine, sans s'en douter, à peu près tous les sentiers de falaises et de montagnes" (XIV, p. 56). Although there is no consciousness in this activity, the relationship between a young girl's play and terrain which threatens human life is disturbing. There is no representation of girlish impishness; there is a real correlation between her play and natural hazards. "Une fille" is a universal term, so that this action is representative of the growing female. At the very least, this is an idle pastime which is incompatible with the dangers it symbolises, so that the young girl is shown not to appreciate the potential for harm, but rather to lean towards it. The leisure of the pre-sexual female suggests the moral fall that their older counterparts can inflict upon a man. The paths the girl traces "s'offrent moins comme une route que comme une chute" (XIV, p. 56). Precipices and meandering footways are of course a danger to both sexes, but it is Gwynplaine who is to tread such a perilous path across the cliffs and the mountainous area of Portland. Moreover, when he has avoided plummeting to his death, he performs an act of benevolence towards a little girl, by saving her life. In their play, girls could be said to be

unwittingly manifesting the feminine propensity for damage and destruction that is at one with nature's will to spoil. It must also be recognised that this childish occupation is unconscious so that a greater evil could be intentionally produced. Instead of creating harmless samplers or drawings, little girls in L'Homme Qui Rit are preoccupied with evil.

In Quatrevingt-Treize, there are more women who are inhospitable and who are not sexually active. Cimourdain chastises Gauvain for not imprisoning the nuns from the convent of St. Marc-le-Blanc, because "ces femmes-là haïssent le peuple" (XV, p. 417). These apparently devout women are therefore no more moral or tolerant than their sexually active counterparts. Cimourdain declares his conviction that the enemy of a woman has more to fear than the enemy of a man: "-et pour la haine une femme vaut dix hommes" (XV, p. 417). The anger and divisiveness of the Terror has penetrated even into the cloistered, monastic retreat. These women who have withdrawn from their society and who have taken the veil are nevertheless taking part in the Terror, so that their religion has no substance. The nuns of St. Marc-le-Blanc have taken a vow to remain celibate, but they are still female, a gender which signifies ruthlessness.

As sexually mature males, Gilliatt and Gwynplaine are no threat to pre-sexual and post-sexual women, but the latter are still shown to menace them. The old woman is not so frail that she does not have sufficient energy to harrass Gilliatt, and she continues to be the forbidding symbol of death that she was in Le Dernier Jour d'Un Condamné. What is perhaps most perplexing is that little girls who have lived too few years to be appreciative of evil indulge in it, although unconsciously in L'Homme Qui Rit. The later novels display a panorama of woman, from her earliest stage of development to her decline, and at every age she has the predilectiont ot be noxious towards the opposite sex. Malevolence is not bound to

sexuality, but to femininity.

Female Monsters

The association between the female and evil in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize is most vividly illustrated in Hugo's selection of the female gender for the monsters in these novels. In an analysis of the female monsters, it must be acknowledged that both Josiane and the *guillotine* are virgins ("-la guillotine est une vierge", XV, p. 359), a state which is apparently incongruous with moral depravity. However, virginity is an integral part of the monstrosity of Josiane and the *guillotine* and their sexual inexperience calls into question the delineation of virginity in the later novels.

The contrariety between virginity and moral reprehensibleness in a female first appears in Les Travailleurs de la Mer. On the *Douvres* rocks, Clubin, the "démon, heureux" (XII, p. 648), makes the analogy between his previous life and the torment of a wanton within a virgin's body: "il enviait la fille publique et le front de bronze de l'opprobre accepté; il se sentait plus fille publique qu'elle, et avait le dégoût de passer pour vierge" (XII, p. 650). Hugo clearly wished to expand upon the portrayal of lewdness seething beneath an untouched skin, because this paradox is the character of Josiane. Her actual virginal state contrasts with the reputed probity of her half-sister Anne and that of Elizabeth I. Hugo satirises the English people for believing that their queens have the righteousness of the Virgin Mary: "quant à leur vertu immaculée, l'Angleterre y tient, nous ne nous y opposons point. Elisabeth est une vierge tempérée par Essex, et Anne est une épouse compliquée de Bolingbroke" (XIV, p. 155). At Court, maidenhood is deceptive or non-existent. However, it is emphasised that Josiane's virginity is only physical: "d'amant, point; de chasteté, pas d'avantage" (XIV, p. 144). Rather than being ashamed of her lubricious

desires, Josiane personifies arrogance: "elle se murait dans l'orgueil" (XIV, p. 144). Clubin's comparison between himself and women with conflicting sexual experiences is immediately followed by an additional reflection on the suffering he has endured because of his dualism: "il avait été le Tantale du cynisme" (XII, p. 650). Tantalus also appears in the delineation of Josiane's character and she would willingly have tortured him: "faire de sa nudité un supplice, éluder un Tantale, l'eût amusée" (XIV, p. 145). The affliction of Tantalus was interminable, so there is the suggestion that Josiane would remain a virgin forever if ceaselessly eluding a man would render his agony unbearable. Josiane intends to use her intact body upon men as an implement of torture. Virginity is an evil in Josiane because it is a possession that she proffers but refuses to surrender. The innocent virginal state is tainted by the gamut of crimes and obscenities devised by Josiane: "toutes les corruptions, à l'état visionnaire, étaient dans cette vierge" (XIV, p. 145). All virgins of her privileged class are deceptive, however. Behind the apparent virgin martyr lurks severe danger: "Agnès contenait Mélusine" (XIV, p. 146). The aristocratic maiden is neither saintly nor even human, but reptilian. Josiane's monstrosity extends to all the females of elevated rank in Stuart society.

Unlike Josiane, the *guillotine* has had untold physical experience of men. Marat contradicts Danton's definition of the *guillotine* as "cette veuve", by insisting that none of her encounters have ever been consummated: "-la guillotine est une vierge; on se couche sur elle, on ne la féconde pas" (XV, p. 359). Hordes of men have lain upon the *guillotine*, but she remains immune to being deflowered or impregnated. Communing with her does not provide sexual pleasure but the endlessness of the grave. "On se couche sur elle" never to rise again. Marat's sexual analogy evokes the

indomitable power of the *guillotine*. She maintains her intact state whilst decapitating (and in Freudian terms castrating) the male. She abrogates his sexual power and excludes him from existence itself. Danton assures Marat that he would fertilise the *guillotine*: "-qu'en savez-vous? répliqua Danton, je la féconderais, moi!" (XV, p. 359). However, there is pathos in this adamant retort. Danton's exclamation is no more than an empty boast to him, but he is not aware of his imminent appointment with the deadly female. He does not fertilise the *guillotine*, but his death increases the blood shed by her, because many more victims will follow him, including Robespierre. Danton laughingly calls himself "une fille publique" (XV, p. 360), but one who is put to death by the virgin *guillotine*. Marat's sobriquet for the *guillotine* is "Louisette" (XV, p. 360), which could be the name of a prostitute. The altruistic and liberating figure of the prostitute that is evoked by Danton "-j'ai vendu mon ventre, mais j'ai sauvé le monde" (XV, p. 360), is cut down by the aversion to transition, which is thus the object of sterility and stagnation.

Josiane is virginal in body, but a whore in mind and spirit, so her sexual status is a sham. She has not been taught debauchery like de Sade's Juliette; her lasciviousness is all of her own design. Her menace to Gwynplaine and his integrity is very great. Before seeing him, her lust was nebulous fantasy, but he provides the opportunity for the latent whore to become a real one. The character of Josiane casts aspersions on the state of virginity, because it is shown to conceal the most scabrous of women. In Quatrevingt-Treize, virginity demonstrates the might of the *guillotine* because it is a *status quo* which she refuses to relinquish and she utterly eradicates masculine strengths. Virginity is thus an integral part of their monstrosity, and all the women in Josiane's class could also be said to be monsters.

However, it is not only the female monsters who reveal disquieting aspects of virginity. Josiane is the virgin savante of carnality, whereas Dea, whose name means 'good' in Irish, has no appreciation of the difference between virginity and sexuality.[40] Nevertheless, the caress between Dea and Gwynplaine is precursory to his meeting with Josiane:

> "Gwynplaine, apercevant à travers une manche de mousseline le bras de Dea, effleura de ses lèvres cette transparence." (XIV, p. 192).

In Corleone-Lodge, Gwynplaine finds Josiane barely covered by an equally fine material: "cette toile, d'une ténuité féerique, était transparente. On voyait au travers" (XIV, p. 309). The flimsy cloth is the symbol of virginity itself, of that which Gwynplaine wishes to deprive Dea, that which Josiane flaunts and that belonging to Gwynplaine which is threatened by Josiane. Hugo calls the dallying of Gwynplaine and Dea "glissement céleste dans ce doux abîme qui est l'amour" (XIV, p. 192), so that even their ethereal relationship is associated with the darkness and devastation of the abyss. Gwynplaine's first glimpse of it is therefore provided by Dea, and Josiane will endeavour to further his decline. Dea is the embodiment of angelic innocence, yet there is something intensely disturbing in her urgent appeal to Gwynplaine to continue caressing her: "Dea releva sa manche et tendit à Gwynplaine son bras nu en disant: Encore! Gwynplaine se tira d'affaire par l'évasion" (XIV, p. 192). She who knows nothing of carnality still desires a greater union of their flesh. In L'Homme Qui Rit, virginal woman is a temptress, encouraging Gwynplaine to deflower her, to indulge in carnality and consequently to commit sin. The later novels seem to suggest that only the appearance of purity exists in women.

The characteristic within the female which condemns her most vehemently is her vanity. "Le monstre" in Les Travailleurs de la Mer adorns herself in the mating season:

> "elle se fait belle, elle s'allume, elle s'illumine, et, du haut de quelque rocher, on peut l'apercevoir au-dessous de soi dans les profondes ténèbres épanouie en une irradiation blême, soleil spectre" (XII, p. 741).

The concept of such repugnance believing that she could make herself beautiful renders her even more monstrous to the reader. "S'allumer" and "s'illuminer" do not repeat an action made by the octopus. After she has beautified herself, *la pieuvre* becomes sexually excited, but it is her own body which arouses her: this monster is a narcissist. The image of the "soleil spectre" is a submerged version of the "affreux soleil noir d'où rayonne la nuit" in Les Contemplations, VI, 26 (Club Français du Livre, IX, p. 376).[41] The elevated position from which the octopus can be seen suggests her desire to copy the Fall of Man, and absorb a male definitively into the obscurity of the deep and her evil. *La pieuvre*'s adornment of herself is the prelude to her destruction of a male, but in L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize death is the antecedent and there are females who embellish themselves with its trappings.

The accessory of female beauty used by Elizabeth I is a weapon of execution: "Marie Stuart jouait de l'éventail et Elisabeth de la hache" (XIV, p. 145). Like the octopus, Elizabeth I attracts men to destroy them. Hugo infers that men in the seventeenth century suffered the same fate as many of their male counterparts in the animal kingdom. The courtly tokens of love worn by men are ridiculed by Marguerite de Valois, who has the hearts of her dead lovers wrenched from their bodies, so that she could wear them around her waist: "Marguerite de Valois, une aïeule des précieuses, avait porté à sa ceinture sous cadenas dans des boîtes de fer-blanc, cousues à son corps de jupe tous les coeurs de ses amants morts" (XIV, p. 146). These lovers were the victims of egocentrism and Marguerite de Valois had their corpses mutilated to extract the vessels of their love for her. Moreover, possessing their hearts did not suffice; she had to

incorporate the decomposing flesh into her apparel. The heart has ceased to be the abstract symbol of affection in L'Homme Qui Rit.

Josiane does not concern herself with the hearts of dead men like her predecessor, but she is equally violent. She haughtily tramples upon countless hearts, as if they were the senseless ground beneath her feet: "elle marchait sur les coeurs" (XIV, p. 144). It is not enough for Josiane to crush the body of a man, but to smother the emotional life within him. By pulverising the hearts of potential suitors, Josiane fleers their affection for her, because her action declares that within her woman's breast there is no heart. Her lack of compassion is reinforced by her lack of a soul, which she is convinced she does not possess because she knows she is more akin to the diabolic than the angelic: "elle était terrestre. On l'eût aussi étonnée de lui montrer une âme dans sa poitrine que de lui faire voir des ailes sur son dos" (XIV, p. 144).

Josiane is not an exception among women of her time in her oppression of men. Being inimical towards their opposite gender is the custom among women of the upper classes in this period. They do not desire men to give their love, but their lives: "on allait en grève baiser sur le pieu de fer des têtes fraîches coupées" (XIV, p. 146). These heads seem to have been severed from their bodies and impaled expressly to satisfy the perversion of these women, who would not have wished to kiss them whilst they were alive. The Freudian association between decapitation and castration signifies that these viragos celebrate the termination of male virility. In doing so, they subsequently assert their own female ferocity. Noblewomen do not indulge in acts of vanity to attract the opposite sex. Their dedication is to death, not to the continuation of the life cycle. Men are butchered and mutilated by the women they love. A gentlewoman requires a man merely to be the sacrifice testifying to her glory.

In Quatrevingt-Treize, female beauty and death are synonymous. The revolutionary soldiers walked through Paris with no boots on their feet, but the Parisian women bared their feet to be ostentatious: "aux pieds nus des soldats couverts de sang, de boue et de poussière succédèrent les pieds nus des femmes ornés de diamants" (XV, p. 344). Unlike their compatriots, these women are prepared to contribute nothing to their people or to the Revolution and their bejewelled feet demonstrate an utter disregard for their countrymen or their torments.

The women in the Paris of the Terror in Quatrevingt-Treize are barbaric, wild and elusive. They parade as "sultanes", "sauvages" and "nymphes" (XV, p. 344) and they have imbued the metropolis with the spirit of Bacchanalia. The *guillotine* is euphemistically defined as a female ornament: "pour l'instant, les deux croissants qui en se rejoignant formaient le collier étaient écartés" (XV, p. 505). Putting a necklace on someone is usually the gift of a lover to his mistress, but the recipient of this fearful "collier" is forced to wear it, and the consequence is destruction, not embellishment. The female in the society of the Terror is as insensitive as the diamonds in which she immerses herself and as the steel from which the *guillotine* blade is wrought.

The female in the later novels can be meretricious in the extreme. In Les Travailleurs de la Mer, *la pieuvre* beautified herself before attracting a male to destroy him, and in L'Homme Qui Rit noblewomen mutilate male remains to assert their own importance. In Quatrevingt-Treize, men are forced to wear a lethal feminine ornament, the *guillotine* "collier". Female beauty has become synonymous with instant obliteration in Quatrevingt-Treize. In the later novels, female vanity does not convey a desire for the perfection of life, but a craving for the death of the males that they attract. Females practise the cult of the glorification of the

self at the expense of all other human beings.

In Ce que dit la Bouche d'Ombre, Hugo specifies evil as matter: "le mal, c'est la matière", and the female monsters of the later novels expound this association. Charles Baudouin draws our attention to the etymological relationship "mater-matrice-matière", so that he affirms matter as a female entity.[42] Each of the later novels displays the destruction of an innocent, unsuspecting male by a noxious mass of female matter. The matter which is responsible for wrecking ships at sea is no longer the stone reef, but the siren which has lured the mortals on board to their deaths: "l'écueil, ce n'est pas le rocher, c'est la sirène" (XIV, p. 312). This quotation demonstrates that in the later novels, Hugo adheres to his belief in the evil of matter, but it has acquired female gender and sexuality.

La pieuvre and Josiane are highly tactile monsters, whereas *la Tourgue* and the *guillotine* are mineral substances that have been activated by female malevolence. *La pieuvre*'s attack is fearful because the hero cannot distinguish himself from the monster: "l'hydre s'incorpore à l'homme; l'homme s'amalgame à l'hydre" (XII, p. 742). Josiane also intends to create confusion in her seduction of Gwynplaine: "mêler le haut et le bas, c'est le chaos, et le chaos me plaît" (XIV, p. 316). In the days of the *Ancien Régime*, *la Tourgue* was the gaol where men were bound to stones: "on attachait à chacune de ses roues un bras et une jambe du patient" (XV, p. 422). It is a gruesome practice that her successor the *guillotine* continues to perform, but with greater speed. The female monster of 1793 demonstrates that progress has not been in the abandonment of capital punishment, but in the more efficient and extensive use of it. Although it belongs to the modern age and has evolved from the Revolution of the Enlightenment, the *guillotine* is anti-progress. All the female monsters in the later novels are devotees of the perpetuation of chaos.

La pieuvre is the epitome of the desire to cling and of the impossibility of ejecting that contact once it is made. Her name conveys that she incorporates the sexual and the bestial. It comprises the colloquial word for 'bed', 'se mettre au pieu', but it also suggests the phallic stake that impales severed heads (XIV, p. 146).[43] The latter part of *pieuvre* contains the echo of the uninviting 'couleuvre'. 'Le monstre' of Les Travailleurs de la Mer is thus a noxious compound of the sexual, the murderous and the reptile. Each of her tentacles is a strap which lashes and then binds Gilliatt: "une troisième lanière ondoya hors du rocher, tâta Gilliatt, et lui fouetta les côtes comme une corde. Elle s'y fixa" (XII, p. 739). The bodily material of the octopus and the rock demonstrate the evil of matter by uniting and removing Gilliatt's freedom of movement which symbolises his freedom of will. *La pieuvre* is sadistic, wishing to touch a male creature, but to inflict pain with its embrace. Gilliatt is attached so securely that he resembles Ixion and the octopus seems to be both his executioner and the torture wheel: "c'est une sorte de roue; déployée, elle a quatre ou cinq pieds de diamètre. Epanouissement effroyable. Cela se jette sur vous" (XII, p. 740). However, these bonds do not only tie Gilliatt down but stick to his skin: "impossible de couper ni d'arracher ces courroies visqueuses qui adhéraient étroitement au corps de Gilliatt et par quantité de points" (XII, p. 739). Fluidity conveys that this monster is the tissue of the sea, but is also suggestive of decomposition. Gilliatt is immobilised and humiliated by the triumph of bestial strength over his human power. He is allowed no sense of moral integrity or physical distinction, because the viscous fluid which seeps out of her pores penetrztes his and sullies his interior. 'Le monstre' in Les Travailleurs de la Mer seeks to feminise the male she embraces and put an end to masculine integrity by saturating him with her odiousness.

Like *la pieuvre*, Josiane also epitomises the asseveration in Ce que dit la Bouche d'Ombre. The monster in L'Homme Qui Rit has risen from beneath the waves, has assumed human form and is defined as the substance of which humans are made: "Josiane, c'était la chair" (XIV, p. 144). Josiane is the magnification of the base and the transient. Her excess of flesh is synonymous with unrestrained indulgence in it: "elle était très grande, trop grande...Elle était grasse, fraîche, robuste, vermeille, avec énormément d'audace et d'esprit" (XIV, p. 144). Josiane's voluptuousness is such that it appears intrusive, forcing men to take notice of it and participate in the delectation of it. The female monster in L'Homme Qui Rit wishes men to desire her as she desires herself, and her chamber in Corleone-Lodge enables her to indulge in an intense narcissism: "cette chambre, très petite, était une espèce de grotte de miroirs" (XIV, p. 309). "La chair" which defines Josiane is synonymous with nakedness and sin, because flesh is revealed when humans are unclothed, the condition in which Adam and Eve fell from grace.

Josiane's antithesis, Dea, is good precisely because she has no concept of flesh or nudity: "la nudité, c'est de se voir nu; aussi ignorait-elle la nudité" (XIV, p. 190). Josiane yearns to taste of Gwynplaine's flesh, "je veux de toi" (XIV, p. 238), but Dea has no knowledge of such a union. Josiane is evil because she urges men to be lustful rather than spiritual. As "la chair", she is matter and therefore malign, as Victor Brombert explains in Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel: "flesh is synonymous with matter, synonymous indeed with the word *monster*" (p. 191). However, her true malevolence is symbolised in the opulence of her body, which converts man to the profanity of sexual desire.

The impropriety of Josiane is compounded because she inflames men with passion for her, but she is totally indifferent towards them. She desires

an unnatural union with a monster, but only because it will indubitably establish her own uniqueness: "elle tenait peu à sa réputation et beaucoup à sa gloire" (XIV, p. 144). Josiane, like *la pieuvre*, is an evil female who would automatically pollute with her embrace. However, she causes men to adore her, but they desire a demon.

The *guillotine* resembles *la pieuvre* more than Josiane. It is dumb, inhuman and attacks men indiscriminately. However, it is highly visible, unlike the marine monster, and has been constructed to incite fear. The *guillotine* does not desire, but her capacity to annihilate is immeasurable. The hero is allowed neither to destroy nor to evade the monster in Hugo's last novel. Josiane was a menace to the life of Gwynplaine's soul, but her successor the *guillotine* terminates life itself. Death is literally the product of the union between the male and the monster in Quatrevingt-Treize.

The female monster is particularly hideous because she employs invasive *male* sexuality against the virgin hero. *La pieuvre* is described as a phallic "parapluie fermé qui n'aurait pas de manche" (XII, p. 740) and it is served by its tentacles which are "huit serpents" (XII, p. 742).[44] The first sight of the octopus is the exploration of a cavity of Gilliatt's body by one of its masculine, reptilian slaves: "en moins d'une seconde, on ne sait quelle spirale lui avait envahi le poignet et le coude et touchait l'épaule. La pointe fouillait l'aisselle" (XII, p. 738). The virgin male prey is forced to endure greater humiliation and distress as her manifold, phallic suckers bury themselves in his skin:

> "ces ventouses sont des cartilages cylindriques, cornés, livides... Ces tronçons de tubes sortent de l'animal et y rentrent. Ils peuvent s'enfoncer dans la proie de plus d'un pouce" (XII, pp. 740-741).

Gilliatt is assailed by his own masculinity and it is indeed an aggressive one because he suffers the deep infestation of every pore. *La pieuvre*

belittles her victim because she is so made that her rape of him appears like his voluntary penetration of her: "la griffe, c'est la bête qui entre dans votre chair; la ventouse, c'est vous-même qui entrez dans la bête" (XII, p. 742). *La pieuvre* is the heinous oppressor of the male.

Gilliatt literally deprives his aggressor of her unnatural male strength by cutting away the head from the tentacles. The female killer rapist is destroyed by the male invasiveness that she had ruthlessly employed against her victim. Masculine virtue and valour, embodied by Gilliatt, reduce the tyrannical female to an innocuous representation of masculinity: "il arracha la tête comme on arrache une dent" (XII, p. 745). The absence of the female sex at the end of this assault accentuates that intense evil belongs to that gender.

The invasiveness of the female monster increases in its violent intensity in L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize. Gilliatt had to endure the horror of flaccid, alien flesh being pushed into his own, but Josiane and the female monsters in Quatrevingt-Treize have much sharper instruments with which to wound their victims. Josiane has the claws of a wild cat to embed in a man's flesh. Gwynplaine is pounced upon by a panther in Corleone-Lodge: "puis, subitement, d'un bond violent, car cette chatte était une panthère, elle se jeta à son cou" (XIV, p. 313). The refinement of this *précieuse* is the fearful elegance of the tigress and beneath the artificial exterior of civilisation lies the rapacity of the untameable. All three heroes are physically punctured by a female monster and Gwynplaine's disfigured mouth is injured again by Josiane: "et elle le mordit d'un baiser" (XIV, p. 317).

There could not be a greater distinction between the females of the earlier novels and their successors. Women in the earlier novels used their teeth in desperate attempts to defend their daughters. La Sachette

is killed after biting the executioner who seizes Esméralda and in order to provide for Cosette, Fantine has all her teeth extracted. The females in the later novels bite to draw blood, like vampires.

To the sadistic duchess, inflicting injury and making love are no different. She derives pleasure from the notion of paining Gwynplaine and proudly boasts "je me donne à toi pure comme la braise ardente" (XIV, p. 315). Losing her virginity is not a surrender to Josiane, but rather the acquisition of the power of the executioner and she will indelibily brand her lover with her own body. Josiane taints the whiteness of virginity, because hers is the searing heat of the torture chamber. The human monster in L'Homme Qui Rit seeks to pollute the interior and the exterior of the male by stabbing him with her claws and teeth and burning the entire surface of his body. Josiane's sexual gratification would exacerbate the disintegration of Gwynplaine's body that was begun by the *comprachicos*. She wishes to tear and scar him so that he would be beyond recognition. The female monster intrudes into the male to dismember and dissolve him.

The female monster aggresses the male and injects her noxiousness into him, but she also seeks to ingest him into it. Copulation with her involves being consumed by her. Although she is an aquatic creature surrounded by water, *la pieuvre* drinks her victims alive: "au-delà du terrible, être mangé vivant, il y a l'inexprimable, être bu vivant" (XII, p. 742). She is the inversion of motherhood, suckling upon any creature passing her lair and her myriad of mouths press upon Gilliatt: "une morsure est redoutable; moins qu'une succion...La bête se superpose à vous par mille bouches infâmes" (XII, p. 742). It is as if Gilliatt has many torturers, because these mouths are individually kissing him and trying to swallow him into their small area. He experiences the humiliation of being the meal of the beast, but at the same time the more profound horror of

being its mate. *La pieuvre* is known to English sailors as "*Blood-sucker*" (XII, p. 741). She strives to mix human blood with the humours of her own body, so that torturer and victim are bound together chemically as a solution: "votre sang jaillit et se mêle affreusement à la lymphe du mollusque" (XII, p. 742). The female monsters in the later novels are parasites, feeding off living human beings.

Josiane's vampiric tendencies are illustrated by her biting of Gwynplaine. Fangs and talons are used in the animal kingdom to tear flesh before digesting it and they are the concretisation of the desire to devour in the later novels. Josiane's passion is delineated as her wish to eat him, so that the synonymity between intercourse and consumption is maintained in L'Homme Qui Rit. Josiane decorates her body as if it were a sweetmeat: "elle se lavait le visage, les bras, les épaules et la gorge avec du sucre candi délayé" (XIV, p. 148). Her transformation of her body into a confectionery is an additional temptation to men, but she intends to eat, not be eaten. Gwynplaine is the feast for which she has yearned: "un amant humilié...cela a une saveur extraordinaire. C'est mordre au fruit de l'abîme" (XIV, p. 315).[45] Gwynplaine does not satisfy a physical hunger. By consuming his body, Josiane will enjoy his abject shame and loathsomeness. Gwynplaine also provides Josiane with the opportunity to transform herself into primeval woman. The serpent tempted Eve to taste the apple, but Josiane covets the fruit of hell:

> "avoir sous la dent la pomme, non du paradis, mais de l'enfer, voilà ce qui me tente, j'ai cette faim et cette soif, et je suis cette Eve-là. L'Eve du gouffre" (XIV, p. 315).

Gwynplaine is at once the fruit of evil and the second Adam. He must satiate the hunger and the thirst of this new Eve, which suggests the extent to which he will be consumed. Josiane's rapaciousness is such that she would absorb all of hell into her body and become its personification.

Josiane seeks to obliterate her victim more completely than *la pieuvre*. She determines to devour his body and his soul. Like Sade's anti-heroine Juliette, Josiane desires interaction with a male to provide her with rapturous delight in the immoral.

The spider is the most dominant symbol of monstrous femininity which threatens to annihilate the male, and it is an image that is associated with *la pieuvre* and Josiane. It was already known in the nineteenth century that the female of the species was superior in size and strength to the male.[46] There is thus a sense of injustice in the unequal combat forced upon the male. In Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel, Professor Brombert draws our attention to Lethierry's tale of his fierce fight with spiders in Paraguay:

> "et dans le Paraguay les araignées d'oiseaux, velues, grosses comme une tête d'enfant, couvrant de leurs pattes un diamètre d'un tiers d'aune, et attaquant l'homme auquel elles lancent leurs poils qui s'enfoncent comme des flèches dans la chair et y soulèvent des pustules" (XII, p. 590).[47]

These vicious predators are clearly the aerial equivalent to the subterranean spider that attacks Gilliatt. The hero is the "mouche de cette araignée" (XII, p. 744) beneath the *Douvres*. Both Lethierry and his adoptive son are thus attacked by enlarged, ferocious female spiders. The relation between the exotic pests and the female sexual organs is striking. They are "velues", "elles lancent leurs poils" at Lethierry and they are as big as "une tête d'enfant". Lethierry and Gilliatt are set upon by female sexuality, that is concretised in the hairy, eight-legged insect.

Besides its physical prepotency, the spider is also the manufacturer of a web which the male cannot avoid because he cannot see it and once ensnared he discovers escape is impossible and he must await agonising death. The image of the web is most significant in L'Homme Qui Rit. It is charged with sexual tension because the transparent curtain covers the

naked Josiane but simultaneously allows Gwynplaine to observe her: "au centre de la toile , à l'endroit où est d'ordinaire l'araignée, Gwynplaine aperçut une chose formidable, une femme nue" (XIV, p. 309). This "toile" ensnares Gwynplaine because it shows him the object of his desire, female nudity. The web does not physically trap Gwynplaine, but the creature at its centre intends to devour him nevertheless.

The spider connotes sexual evil because its many legs radiate out, so they have the capacity to capture a male and absorb him into the blackness of its body. Once it has woven its deadly web, the spider can remain in the indolent, reclining position of the prostitute, ever willing to receive the opposite gender. The viscous web, the grasping limbs and the hairiness of the body are all suggestive of inescapable bonds:

> "le lien c'est la puissance magique et néfaste de l'araignée, de la pieuvre et aussi de la femme fatale et magicienne".[48]

The spider is thus the symbol *par excellence* of the desperate need of the male to protect his separateness and integrity from being corroded by the impure female. The spider is the crystallisation of a line from Les Contemplations, "un affruex soleil noir d'où rayonne la nuit", VI, 26 (IX, p. 376). This line is used by Baudouin as the epigram to his chapter 'Arachné-Aranké', a title which conveys the irresistible magnetism with which the female attracts the male to her destructiveness. At the centre of its web, and with her legs drawing attention to her centre, Baudouin expounds that this insect symbolises extreme narcissism:

> "l'araignée menaçante au centre de sa toile, est par ailleurs un excellent symbole de l'introversion ou du narcisme, cette absorption de l'être par son propre centre".[49]

Baudouin proceeds with the suggestion that the spider visualises "la Mère terrible" but this analysis does not sufficiently accentuate the intensely sexual threat posed by *la pieuvre* and Josiane.[50] The spider pulls the male into her centre, which is nothingness. *La pieuvre* is the void, "il

n'y a rien dedans" (XII, p. 741) and Josiane also recognises the chasm gouged in Gwynplaine's face as the black emptiness of her soul: "ton visage, c'est mon âme" (XIV, p. 316). Like her predecessor, Josiane would absorb the male into her primordial chaos: "tout rompre, tout braver, tout faire, tout défaire, c'est vivre" (XIV, p. 315). The male is the fuel of female megalomania, which is synonymous with oblivion. Hugo establishes that the life of the evil female automatically necessitates the death of the male.

In Quatrevingt-Treize, the spider has ceased to be a symbolic force, but the female monster continues to devour the male. However, her capacity to consume and her appetite have increased immeasurably. A breach in the wall of *la Tourgue* swallows Gauvain, Cimourdain and the band of attacking revolutionaries:

> "les assaillants avaient devant eux ce porche noir, bouche de gouffre ayant pour mâchoires, en bas et en haut, toutes les pierres de la muraille déchiquetée; une gueule de requin n'a pas plus de dents que cet arrachement effroyable. Il fallait entrer dans ce trou et en sortir" (XV, pp. 458-459).

The forest of teeth in these monstrous jowls conveys the desire for destruction that was innate in Josiane and *la pieuvre*. Gauvain and his battalion must repeat the journeys made by Orpheus and Jonah, but unlike them, they will not return. The gaping mouth of the female monster is no longer the passage to oblivion, but the gateway to the endless torments of hell.

The theme of being carved by a monster with an indefatigable appetite culminates in the *guillotine*. This machine has no mouth and derives no satisfaction from killing. The *guillotine* executes both sexes - Charlotte Corday is cited as one of her victims - but the Freudian synonymity between beheading and castration renders the *guillotine* a particular threat to masculinity.[81] The fear of the inescapable, previously suggested by the

spider, remains, because the condemned man is tied before being executed (XV, p. 508). The horror of being devoured is condensed in its steel blade, which is an imperishable incisor and needs to make only one cut to end the life of a man. Quatrevingt-Treize exhibits *la Tourgue*, which consumes en masse, and the *guillotine*, which ceaselessly kills individuals, so that the capacity for destruction is immense. Like *la pieuvre*, the *guillotine* kills arbitrarily, yet each time she slaughters she does so with the sanction of the state. The *guillotine* also continues the relationship between the female monster and the reiteration of the Fall of Man. Gilliatt encountered *la pieuvre* when he descended into the waters; Josiane was intent on making Gwynplaine fall from grace, and the descent of the *guillotine*'s blade is the approach of death to a man. Being dispatched to oblivion by the female monster was only a potential hazard for Gilliatt and Gwynplaine, but in Quatrevingt-Treize it is a reality for Gauvain and countless others. The menace of the female monster is diminished in Les Travailleurs de la Mer and in L'Homme Qui Rit, but in Quatrevingt-Treize the masculine representation of monstrosity, l'Imânus, is struck down, whereas the *guillotine* continues to exercise its bloody might. The female monster is a force that cannot be eradicated.

Bestiality is not only used to impart the savagery of the female monsters. It is applied to many women characters in the later novels, particularly in Les Travailleurs de la Mer and L'Homme Qui Rit, so that uncontrollable ferocity and destructiveness are almost universal characteristics of women.

In L'Homme Qui Rit, bestiality is one of the traits of the most dominant women in England. Queen Anne appears to be a relative of *la pieuvre*: "elle était tenace et molle" (XIV, p. 153). The women of her age are all innately animal. In Corleone-Lodge, Gwynplaine does not find

"Josiane nue", nor "la duchesse nue", but "une femme nue". This anonymous expression thus establishes that female nakedness is the mortal danger to all men, not merely Gwynplaine. The spider is the universal image for all women.

The most interesting association between bestiality and woman is that characterising Déruchette. There seems to be no connection between Déruchette, "une ravissante fille du pays" (XII, p. 556) and the blood-drinking monster which aggresses Gilliatt whilst he is on a mission to win her hand. However, the animal imagery depicting Déruchette reveals that the octopus is the palpable magnification of the latent violence within Déruchette. When she writes Gilliatt's name in the snow, Déruchette is cloaked in "une large mante" (XII, p. 556), a garment which evokes the insect that eats her mate after coupling with him. Déruchette is immediately associated with sexuality from which destruction ensues. Moreover, Déruchette has tiny hands and feet, but her uncle's praise of them, "*quatre pattes de mouche*" (XII, p. 578), prefigures the helpless position of Gilliatt when confronted with the *pieuvre-araignée*.

Whilst Josiane is the fully developed "panthère", Déruchette is a kitten but she wounds nevertheless: "elle donnait un sourire comme un jeune chat donne un coup de griffe. Tant pis pour l'égratigné" (XII, p. 595). Her thoughtless indifference for her victim and her selfishness ally Déruchette to her fellow females, *la pieuvre* and Josiane. La *Durande* has the appearance of a monster (XII, p. 578), but it is her *alter ego* who has true spite. There is the implication that Déruchette could be capable of inflicting more grievous woe: "si elle eût rencontré le diable, elle n'en eût pas eu pitié, elle lui eût fait une niche" (XII, pp. 594-595).

The image of the bee most closely relates Déruchette to *la pieuvre*. The name Déruchette contains the word "ruche", and the hive evokes the

labyrinth in which innumerable males are enslaved by a despotic queen. The bee incites fear because of its ability to wound and it is also a symbol of attack; *la pieuvre* pierces Gilliatt's skin after aggressing him. The malevolence inherent in Déruchette's sexuality is first suggested by the bees in the corner of the garden where Gilliatt spies upon the object of his desire:

> "je comprends. Déruchette est amoureuse de moi...Il regardait vaguement les gros bourdons noirs à croupes jaunes et à ailes courtes qui s'enfoncent avec bruit dans les trous des murailles" (XII, p. 600).

These diminutive creatures are assiduously transforming solid rock, and this destruction which is incommensurate with the insignificance of its perpetrators recalls the trenchant smiles of Déruchette. She will have the same influence upon Gilliatt's mind as the masonry bees upon the stone walls, until she has reduced it to a labyrinth of delusion. On the towering phalluses of the *Douvres* rocks, the object of Gilliatt's sexual desire makes her presence known to him: "il venait du large un murmure semblable à un bruit d'abeilles" (XII, p. 670). The sonorous nature of the bee is also relevant, because Gilliatt's only communication with Déruchette is his musical reply to her song *Bonny Dundee*. The menacing cacophony perceived by Gilliatt on the *Douvres* emanates from a more daunting, ancient entity than the insect. The hive in "Déruchette" is echoed in the definition of the *Douvres*, "une ruche d'hydres" (XII, p. 636) and Déruchette's malice seems to fill the very reef on which Gilliatt treads. From a small insect, female ferocity has been magnified into the monstrous water-snake which has the power to reproduce itself endlessly with each death blow it receives. The bee dies from its attack, but the hydra does not, and the fleeting irritation of a sting has been supplanted by a lethal bite. Eve and the serpent are one.

Bees reappear at Gilliatt's suicide. "Les travailleuses des ruches

étaient dehors" (XII, p. 790) is an image which reinforces Déruchette's elopement, which is her rejection of the hero.[52] The noun "travailleuses" also indicates that whether directly or indirectly, female malevolence has been working to destroy Gilliatt. The relationship between the monster and the young maiden suggests that there is a universal femininity that conspires to attract the male and sacrifice him as a tribute to the sovereignty of the female.

Ancient, extreme malignity is more often than not given female form in the later novels. Medusa lives on as the octopus (XII, p. 742) which Gilliatt must combat like a new Perseus. 1793 is also "Méduse" (XV, p. 345). Josiane too is the continuation of Medusa. When Gwynplaine sees her in Corleone-Lodge, Josiane's hair is "cette vermeille chevelure" (XIV, p. 310). Blonde hair is evocative of Botticelli's Venus, but the clashing hues of purple and red suggest the freshly severed head of Medusa, who continued to turn men to stone even after she had been slain. Gwynplaine "était à la fois pétrifié et bouleversé" (XIV, p. 310) at the sight of the naked Josiane. Medusa thus embodies interminable evil.

Medusa's name denotes tyranny, meaning "ruler" and "queen", and she was pregnant when Perseus beheaded her.[53] The serpent tresses which grow from Medusa's head suggest that these venomous creatures are the product of the female mind. A snake also issues from the impervious stone that is Josiane's heart, so that her love is the deadly injection of poison: "ce serpent, c'est mon amour. Amour tout-puissant! car il t'a fait venir" (XIV, p. 315). In his analysis of the mythical alliance between woman and the serpent, Gilbert Durand concludes that woman has the secret power to kill the reptile:

> "comme le suggère profondément la tradition chrétienne, si c'est par le sexe féminin que le mal s'est introduit dans le monde, c'est que la femme a pouvoir sur le mal et peut écraser le serpent".[54]

In the later novels of Hugo, however, the female chooses not to crush the snake but to use it as a living weapon against man. *La pieuvre* is "Méduse servie par huit serpents" (XII, p. 742). The conspiracy between the snake and the female evokes the Fall of Man, yet there is little distinction between Eve and the reptile in L'Homme Qui Rit. The murderousness of the Gorgon is compounded by the moral destruction of the original woman. The Eve inside Corleone-Lodge is not tempted by a beast which is Satan transmogrified. Indeed, in L'Homme Qui Rit. the true devil is established as female, not male:

> "on calomnie le démon. Ce n'est pas lui qui a tenté Eve. C'est Eve qui l'a tenté. La femme a commencé" (XIV, p. 237).

There is even the suggestion that Satan would not have existed had he not encountered "la femme": "Lucifer passait tranquille. Il a aperçu la femme. Il est devenu Satan" (XIV, p. 237). The female's temptation of the male with her body is the ultimate crime. In a chapter entitled 'Eve', Josiane is the passive object of desire, but when she is actively enticing Gwynplaine the chapter title is 'Satan', so that the malignity of Josiane is more extreme than that even of the Devil, as Professor Brombert recognises:

> "The chapter entitled 'Eve', followed by the longer chapter 'Satan', betray an almost theological fear of woman. Eve is in fact, declared "worse than Satan".[88]

Adam was encouraged to taste of the apple, but Gwynplaine is bitten by the poisonous female Beast. Josiane's crime is to return man to primeval disorder and sully him again.

Eve was not an exception, but the first of a species. Professor Brombert declares that in L'Homme Qui Rit "the real monster is thus Eve-Josiane", but Josiane is not the only reincarnation of Eve in her society. None of the women in the late Stuart England of L'Homme Qui Rit are humbled by the misdeeds of their ancestor. Indeed, they surpass Eve in their

audacity and lubricity. They play the rôle of God, by awarding the castigation of banishment to their husband, who is the victim of their crime. Their transgression is adultery and their lover is none other than the Devil himself: "elle s'enferme dans l'éden avec Satan. Adam est dehors" (XIV, p. 147). This illicit relationship suggests that a woman's iniquity is at least equal to that of Satan. The Eves of L'Homme Qui Rit have developed a taste for the perverse. What is more, their deceit enables them to escape punishment: "jamais, couvrant sa fragilité de son charme, et sa faiblesse de sa toute-puissance, elle ne s'est plus impérieusement fait absoudre" (XIV, p. 147).

Hugo accentuates the alliteration in "femme" and "faute" to indicate their proximity and asserts the concentration of femininity in the women of the eighteenth century to convey their utter maleficence:

> "si femme signifie faute, comme je ne sais plus quel concile l'a affirmé, jamais la femme n'a plus été femme qu'en ces temps-là" (XIV, p. 147).

In the century before the Revolution, woman was supremely evil, but the hypothesis "si femme signifie faute" suggests that she still persists. In this re-assessment of the Fall of Man, the culprit is not the serpent, the fruit, the tree of knowledge or the sin of temptation, but woman herself. Masculinity was doomed solely because of the presence of the female, who needed no corruption because her evil was already replete. Woman is culpable because evil would not have existed without her. She recommits past crimes and is devoted to lawlessness. She does not allow man an identity other than Adam and will not refrain from her attacks upon him.

Conclusion

In spite of appearances, it has not been my intention to propose that Hugo was a conscious and active misogynist in this study of the malevolent female. His diaries provide ample testament to his generosity towards poor

widows and their children and he was the champion of oppressed women of his time. He alone wrote in support of Rosalie Doise, who was falsely accused of parricide in 1862.[56] However, it would nevertheless be incorrect to suggest that Hugo's later novels echoed the active benevolence he showed towards women in his real life. The mother appears to be the antithesis to the monster, but these two figures merge in the later novels. In Les Travailleurs de la Mer and Quatrevingt-Treize, cosmic and political mothers engender creations which are the intensifications of their own evil and in L'Homme Qui Rit the distended human beings at Court pay testament to the malignity of the anti-mothers who had them manufactured. Maternal devotion is not dominant in many females; they are driven by all the forces that are contrary to compassionate motherhood. The evil females are hedonists, and gain sadistic pleasure from the infliction of pain, killing and devouring. However, they luxuriate principally in themselves. Gwynplaine, Jeffrey Hudson and many of the "magots" are the masculine victims of female vanity and they are the outward visualisation of the dissoluteness of Stuart women. Many female characters in the later novels have monstrous tendencies, so that the monster is a general and not an exceptional creature. The monsters in the later novels are not those who are outwardly hideous. They are outwardly beautiful, but they have a fetid soul.

The female's incessant desire for sex, her dedication to chaos and her perpetuation of the past crimes of Medusa and Eve manifest that she is incapable of progress. In Les Misérables, Hugo wrote "seulement un peuple civilisateur doit rester un peuple mâle", and this view is supported by the presence of the rapacious females in the later novels.[57] The suggestion that women are the opponents and destroyers of civilisation rather than its creators echoes a warning in the letters to the Corinthians by Saint Paul, whom Hugo included among his collection of "Les Génies" in William

Shakespeare.[58] Freud was also to expound the belief that civilisation could be wrought by men alone in Civilisation and its Discontents.[59] The female appears condemned by her physiognomy. The womb that she carries within her is the continuation of primeval chaos and her sexual organ is the exit to dark oblivion for the male.

Hugo's lubricious portrait of Eve emphasises that the female's sin is her body. Hugo constantly reproaches woman for her sexuality, "c'est de toi, femme, que nous avons besoin" (XIV, p. 236), but the urgent carnality was obviously his own, projected onto the object of his desire. I believe that the violent and insatiable portrayal of the female in the later novels is Hugo's remonstrance against ardent, sexual need that refuses to be denied. I would agree with Laurent Jenny's interpretation of sexual desire in Hugo as "cette version du monstre" which is the "horreur charmante et familière où s'engouffre sombrement la moralité".[60]

Baudouin's correlation "arachné-ananké" imbues fate with the egocentric mercilessness of the bestial female. At the very least love can be impossible for the male to achieve, because of the selfishness of the female. However, the delineation of many of the females suggests that the male's encounter with the opposite sex is not merely an unhappy one, but a mortal threat to his being. To quote Professor Brombert, Hugo "perceived the inexorable call of sex as an alienation from the self, a threat to the integrity of being".[61]

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo, Editions du Mont Blanc, Geneva, 1943, p. 149.

2. Characters such as Lethierry (XII, p. 573) and Ursus (XIV, p. 122) demonstrate the benevolence of the Anima, yet the presence of the Animus never receives a positive interpretation in the later novels. The presence of all genders in the male is a metaphor for his ability to perform any task demanded of him like a "surhomme", but the female is either monstrous or brutal if she is masculine.

3. Stephen Dewar, Witchcraft and the Evil Eye in Guernsey. Guernsey Historical Monograph Number 3, Toucan Press, St. Peter Port, Guernsey, 1974, p. 17.

4. Witches first appeared in the Hugolian novel in 1820 when Hugo delineated black sorceresses in Bug-Jargal. These female characters are commensurate with the exotic milieu of the novel, so that the women, like the topography, are "autre" to their European counterparts, and are therefore not submissive, nor constrained by the will of men. However, it is interesting to note that Hugo chose to incorporate these enigmatic, dangerously powerful females into his depictions of Western society in the later novels.

5. La Terreur et les Signes, Gallimard, Paris, 1982, p. 128.

6. *op. cit.*, p. 128.

7. *op. cit.*, p. 128.

8. *op. cit.*, p. 127.

9. Room's Classical Dictionary, Adrian Room, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1983, pp. 193-194.

10. In IRIS Numéro 1, Université de Grenoble, 1987, p. 77.

11. In Ecrire Hugo, (Gallimard, Paris, 1977), Henri Meschonnic astutely observes that "Hugo isole ce qu'il y a d'animal dans l'instinct maternel" (p. 194). However, he goes on to suggest that the suffering of Michelle Fléchard makes her "une figure de la mère du Christ, puis du Christ" (p. 194). This is surely an inaccurate suggestion, since Hugo drew parallels between Fantine and Christ, but he makes no such comparison between Michelle Fléchard and Christ. Meschonnic's interpretation applies exactly to Fantine, but Michelle Fléchard is quite distinct from her.

12. Room's Classical Dictionary, Adrian Room, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1983, p. 91.

13. Roman 24798, folio 198-180/217, 1854-55, in Portefeuille Romanesque, Du Roman Serk aux Travailleurs de la Mer, Club Français du Livre, X, p. 1163.

14. Les Contemplations, VI, 26 (Club Français du Livre, IX, p. 373).

15. "Le crâne, fêlé et fendu, avait l'hiatus d'un fruit pourri" (XIV, p. 66).

16. Les Structures Anthropolgiques de l'Imaginaire, Collection Etudes Supérieures, Bordas, Paris, 1969, p. 114.

17. Room's Classical Dictionary, Adrian Room, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1983, p. 90.

18. The monster *La Tourgue* is also connected with the destructiveness of water. In his illustrated work La Tourgue dans la Forêt de Fougères, Etienne Aubrée states that the original construction which inspired the tower in Quatrevingt-Treize was *la Tour Mélusine*. It was decorated with "la fée Mélusine sous la forme d'une sirène" (*op. cit.*, p. 10). Hugo's drawing, La Tourgue en 1835, depicts two adjoining buildings, and the tower is almost the replica of *la Tour Mélusine*, which Hugo visited with Juliette Drouet during their holiday to her native Brittany in 1836. *La Tourgue* is of course a fusion of stone and humanity, because it is "La Tour Gauvain", which was the maiden name of Juliette Drouet. The second construction in La Tourgue en 1835 resembles 6, place Royale in Paris. Does this drawing, in its architectural representations, contain all Hugo's sexual and emotional tensions of struggling to maintain his marriage and his illicit affair? It is noticeable that the building resembling his marital home is in ruins, and it leans against the tower, which suggests Hugo's dependency upon his Breton lover.

19. La Terreur et les Signes, Gallimard, Paris, 1982, p. 135.

20. Les Structures Anthropolgiques de l'Imaginaire, Collection Etudes Supérieures, Bordas, Paris, 1969, p. 121. Durand quotes from Germaine Dieterlen's work Essai surla religionBambara, P.U.F., Paris, 1951, p. 16.

21. *op. cit.*, p. 121. Durand quotes from J. Przyluski's work, La Grande Déesse, Payot, Paris, 1950, p. 196.

22. Les Structures Anthropolgiques de l'Imaginaire. Collection Etudes Supérieures, Bordas, Paris, 1969, p. 121.

23. Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo, Editions du Mont Blanc, Geneva, 1943, p. 147.

24. *op. cit.*, p. 147.

25. The present tense should be noted here. It could be interpreted as a comment by Hugo on the morality of his time. A cutting from the newspaper L'Indépendance Belge concerning the kidnapping of children in Peking is affixed to the manuscript of L'Homme Qui Rit (N.a.f. 24746).

26. Hugo chose not to inform the reader that one pregnant woman "au service des patriotes...fut tuée par les royalistes" (Oeuvres Complètes de Victor Hugo, Editions Ollendorff, Paris, 1924, tome 9, p. 463). Ollendorff quotes from Lettres sur l'origine de la Chouannerie, dédiés au roi par J. Duchemin-Descepeaux, A L'Imprimerie Royale, MDCCCXXV, tome 1, p. 372. It is noticeable that the royalist author of this text defines these espial women as "les femmes enceintes" whereas Hugo employs the more derogatory term "les femmes grosses".

27. History in the Text: Quatrevingt-Treize, Purdue University Monographs in Romance Languages, Volume III, Amsterdam/John Benjamins B.V., 1980, p. 26.

28. Gilliatt has a predecessor in Queequeg, a character in Moby Dick. He practises the same art to save a fellow shipmate's life: "and thus, through the courage and great skill in obstetrics of Queequeg, the deliverance, or rather, the delivery of Tashtego, was successfully accomplished, in the teeth, too, of the most untoward and apparently hopeless impediments; which is a lesson by no means to be forgotten. Midwifery should be taught in the same course with fencing and boxing, riding and rowing" (Herman Melville, Moby Dick. Collins, London, 1963, p. 297. First published 1851, First Collins Edition 1953). The similarity in the delineation of these two sea adventures is striking, particularly as both Gilliatt and Queequeg were struggling against apparently insurmountable opposition. The synonymity which Melville draws between "deliverance" and "delivery" should also be noted.

29. L'Homme Qui Rit ou la Parole-Monstre de Victor Hugo. SEDES, Paris, 1985, p. 145.

30. I am endetted to Professor Thompson for providing me with both of these facts.

31. Club Français du Livre, III, p. 703.

32. Club Français du Livre, III, p. 703.

33. Gauvain's premonition of death acquires more chilling significance because in his diary (December 28th, 1873, Hugo noted that it was whilst he was revising this sentence for the publication of Quatrevingt-Treize that he was called urgently to the bedside of his dying son: "c'est à ce moment-là qu'on m'a apporté le billet de Gouzien m'appelant en hâte près de Victor" (Oeuvres Complètes de Victor Hugo, Ollendorff, Tome 9, p. 471). François-Victor died on December 26th, 1873.

34. Club Français du Livre, III, p. 688.

35. Club Français du Livre, III, p. 677.

36. Club Français du Livre, III, p. 678.

37. Club Français du Livre, III, p. 678.

38. Club Français du Livre, III, p. 679.

39. Club Français du Livre, III, p. 677.

40. Hugo clearly had access to native speakers of Irish, since some of the children he invited to the 'repas des enfants pauvres' at Hauteville-House were Irish (XII, p. 1442). For the definition of 'dea' in Irish, see Foclóir Póca, English - Irish Dictionary, An Gúm, Dublin, 1986, p. 333.
Dea's name could also originate from the phrase "*patuit dea*" which is referred to in Philosophie, Commencement d'Un Livre, XII, p. 28. Jean Massin reminds us that "*patuit dea*" is originally to be found in Virgil's The Aeneid. Virgil uses the expression to glorify Aphrodite, but she was nevertheless a female who neglected her son. Dea's name could thus have negative connotations.

41. Baudouin uses this quotation from Les Contemplations as an epigraph to the chapter 'La mère terrible' in Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo, p. 127.

42. Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo, p. 137.

43. Nouveau Larousse Illustré, Publié sous la direction de Claude Augé, Paris, Tome Sixième, p. 886.

44. Pierre Georgel informs us that there could be an association between *la pieuvre* and Adèle II: "L'ombrelle et le pose indolente rappellent certaines

photos d'Adèle Hugo, la fille du poète, dont le conflit avec ce dernier battait son plein au moment où il écrivait Les Travailleurs de la Mer" (Les Dessins de Victor Hugo. Editions Herscher, Paris, 1985, p. 110).

Professor Thompson has suggested to me that there may be an association between *la pieuvre* and the bagpipes played by Gilliatt in his attempt to woo Déruchette. In the manuscript of the novel, Livre Quatrième, is entitled 'Le Bug-Pipe' (N.a.f. 13382) and Professor Thompson believes that Hugo has not made an error in his spelling of the English word, which is contrary to the view of many Hugolian scholars. "Le Bug" is suggestive of a living, hideous parasite. *La pieuvre* has a similar structure to the bagpipes: it too contains an empty sac and the phallic pipes of the musical instrument evoke the tentacles, but the latter are, of course, deadly protuberances.

The female monster which kills with her phallic limbs that are whips could be seen as a hermaphrodite. This dual nature is reinforced by the Highlander who sold the bagpipes to Gilliatt, because he was clad in the female attire of a "jupon" (XII, p. 598). *La pieuvre* is thus the nightmare animation of the instrument that Gilliatt employed daily to please Déruchette. The bagpipes were harmless, and they were controlled and animated by Gilliatt; *la pieuvre* is huge and alive. She gropes Gilliatt with the intention of extracting the life from him. The relationship between the bagpipes and *la pieuvre* is a caution against courting a woman who is indifferent to your affection.

45. "Fruit de l'abîme" recalls *le pendu*. See footnote 15 to this chapter.

46. See the definition of 'Araignée', in the Grand Larousse, p. 545.

47. Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1984, p. 150.

48. Les Structures Anthropolgiques de l'Imaginaire. Collection Etudes Supérieures, Bordas, Paris, 1969, p. 118.

49. Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo, Editions du Mont Blanc, Geneva, 1943, p. 137.

50. *op. cit.*, pp. 137-138.

51. XV, p. 426.

52. The flight of Adèle Hugo from the family home of Hauteville-House is also brought to mind by Déruchette's elopement.

53. Room's Classical Dictionary. Adrian Room, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1983, p. 191.

54. Les Structures Anthropologiques de l'Imaginaire. Collection Etudes Supérieures, Bordas, Paris, 1969, p. 128.

55. Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel. Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1984, p. 192.

56. The Rosalie Doise case is documented in Massin's edition, XII, pp. 874-875.

57. XI, p. 864.

58. I Corinthians, 7, 1: "It is good for a man not to touch a woman".

59. Civilisation and its Discontents, The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Translated by James Strachey, Hogarth Press, London, 1974, Volume 21, p. 73.

60. La Terreur et les Signes. Gallimard, Paris, 1982, p. 140.

61. Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel. Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1984, p. 193.

Chapter Two - The Evil of Metamorphosis

To continue from the previous chapter, the theme of metamorphosis is similar to that of the female, in that it also differs considerably from its functioning in the earlier works. The proliferation of changes in the later novels is such that this chapter will need to examine metamorphosis in nature, the cosmos and in men. It will also need to distinguish between the metamorphosis that is chosen by an individual and that which is imposed by external forces, such as society, nature or fate. It is my intention to demonstrate that the latter is more prevalent and more damaging, and so adds to the pessimism of these novels.

In the earlier works, man's potential to change himself for the better and to create good is indisputable. Notre-Dame de Paris celebrates printing, the paragon of beneficial change. Hugo calls printing "la révolution mère" (IV, p. 141), a change that acts as a catalyst, encouraging other phenomena to transform themselves for the better. This innovation supplants durable architecture, but Hugo considers that printing embodies yet greater stability, "elle passe de la durée à l'immortalité" (IV, p. 141). Printing is the paradigm and inspiration for the universal movement towards the positive, particularly since it cannot be eradicated by evil: "on peut démolir une masse, comment extirper l'ubiquité?" (IV, p. 141). In Quatrevingt-Treize, however, Hugo allows a library to be burned and a more pessimistic prognostication to be suggested. A serious question is thus raised about the durability of books and the permanence of change for the better.

Les Misérables opens in 1815, the year in which foreign forces suppressed the Revolution. However, although social advancement is temporarily thwarted, the moral conversion of a hardened criminal nevertheless takes place. This single metamorphosis of Jean Valjean's character results in almost immeasurable good, providing jobs, donating

charitable works, adopting an orphan and saving life. The possibility of the achievement of good is forcefully manifested, because the evildoer who is beyond redemption becomes the martyr of universal salvation: "le forçat se transfigurait en Christ" (XI, p. 990). Base flesh can contain the immortal and the supremely benevolent.

There is such a conviction as to man's potential to achieve good that "transfigurations" abound in Les Misérables, from the sublime to the banal. Revolutions, love and the changing Parisian topography are all described as "transfigurations" and Hugo even sees grounds for optimism in the re-employment of sewage: "ainsi le veut cette création mystérieuse qui est la transformation sur la terre et la transfiguration dans le ciel" (XI, p. 873).

Love remains a transfiguring force in Les Travailleurs de la Mer (XII, p. 767) and in L'Homme Qui Rit (XIV, p. 189), but the "transfiguration" of Gwynplaine and Dea is entirely different to that of Marius and Cosette. The love of Gwynplaine and Dea is a pariahs' paradise, which to some extent appears to console them for their physical afflictions. The brilliant light of a "transfiguration" is also discordant when applied to the blind girl who has no concept of luminosity until she is dying. The term "transfiguration" has become ironic, Barkilphedro describes Gwynplaine's elevation to noble status as a "transfiguration" (XIV, p. 281), yet it terminates his mortal happiness. Gauvain yearns to be "transfiguré" (XV, p. 485) like the saviour of the children, but his desire to be similarly transformed leads him to a gruesome earthly destruction. In L'Homme Qui Rit, transfiguration has become a compensation for evil rather than the abolition of it and the transfiguration of Lantenac in Quatrevingt-Treize is the catalyst of destruction for the young, humanitarian hero. So "transfiguration" no longer has the enduring, positive consequence that it

displayed in Les Misérables, where it confirmed the movement towards lasting good. The transition from evil to good has become a much more difficult and rare event in the later novels and a positive transformation is often succeeded by negativity.

Change is omnipresent in the later novels.[1] Bug-Jargal and Han d'Islande were set on land, Le Dernier Jour d'Un Condamné, Notre-Dame de Paris and Les Misérables in the midst of Paris, but their successors are all to some extent at sea. This mobile environment, in which metamorphosis is inherent, suggests the importance of the theme of change in these works.[2] Hugo elected to depict the developing careers of his characters within a maelstrom. Hubert Juin defines the Hugolian sea as "un tissu qui ne cesse de se défaire".[3] The ocean does not confine its predilection for change to itself. The shipwreck scenes convey water's desire to permeate all it contacts. Hugo destabilises his characters' universe by displaying its constituent elements and they are in perpetual motion and at war with one another. With unsteadiness all around them, the characters are also subject to physical alteration. Their bodies are matter like the oscillating elements around them. During the storms at sea, the winds and waves lash at Gilliatt and the *comprachicos* as they batter the inanimate rocks and timbers on which they stand. The forces of change consider nothing to be inviolable. Moreover, rearrangement of the individual's life and body can be swift, even when against his wishes.

Of course, it must be acknowledged that a readily changing environment has much more potential for benevolent metamorphosis than an intransigent, rigid universe. However, it must also be recognised that in the later novels, Hugo concentrates upon depicting the changes that, more often than not, are for the worse. Also, whilst physical instability can be an aid to benevolent change, the ceaselessness of metamorphosis is an obstacle

towards its endurance. But whereas the advance towards good is an irrepressible if tardy force in Les Misérables, in the later novels change itself repeatedly results in negativity. Good can be swept away at any moment and can merely be the forbidding presage of an imminent change towards evil: "une caresse préalable assaisonne les trahisons" (XII, p. 697). Even when good is achieved, such as Gilliatt's transformation from rude fisherman to Classical hero, or Gwynplaine's transition from repugnant monster to romantic lover at the end of *Chaos vaincu*, emphasis is still upon the hardships endured to win these transient goals. A benevolent metamorphosis is no longer a panacea but a Pyrrhic victory.

Notre-Dame de Paris and Les Misérables bear witness to an irrepressible force of positive creation, but in the later novels, the sea evokes an invincible power devoted to destruction. In the earlier novels, there was purpose in metamorphosis, the achievement of good, but in the later novels the desire for change appears arbitrary and gratuitous, and good is sacrificed to havoc: "il est vrai que ce que le flux avait fait, le reflux allait le défaire" (XII, p. 713). Progress maintains its moral superiority, but reaction and chaos have greater temporal strength in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize. Negative forces have become so powerful in Quatrevingt-Treize that good can be eradicated in an instant with no trace of it remaining, as if it had never existed.

Positive Forces

Despite my emphasis upon the pessimistic nature of metamorphosis in the later novels, I do not wish to suggest that negativity is such that it has extinguished all movement towards good. Positive forces indubitably persist in these works, and particularly in the first novel of this series, Les Travailleurs de la Mer.

In Les Misérables, Jean Valjean initially has no inclination to change for the better; indeed, he steals Myriel's silver. But the bishop declares that he is an innocent man in front of the police, so that Jean Valjean undergoes a positive conversion which prepares his personal decision to become righteous. The hero of Les Misérables does not therefore make any progressive movement until he has witnessed the possibility of such a transformation. In the later novels, however, positive metamorphosis is self-determined, so Hugo demonstrates that in spite of formidable opposition, the individual human will can still be oriented towards good.

The most permanent beneficial changes are found in Les Travailleurs de la Mer and they are advances which are universal gains. The steamship is defined as "l'ascension du progrès" (XII, p. 579) and is the concrete testament to the potential of positive forces throughout the novel. The *Durande* is representative of the human endeavour to strive towards good, an inclination which is represented as entirely contrary to that in nature. The octopus is the culmination of nature's attempts throughout the ages to create an infinitely evil being: "comparées à la pieuvre, les vieilles hydres font sourire" (XII, p. 739). The *Durande* remains a constant symbol of progress and is juxtaposed with the extremely unpredictable and hostile environment surrounding it.

The fluid cosmos delineated in L'Archipel de la Manche tirelessly indulges in self-transformation and self-destruction: "de vastes blocs s'écroulent, l'eau roule des nuages de galets, nos ports s'ensablent ou s'empierrent, l'embouchure de nos fleuves se barre. Chaque jour un pan de la terre normande se détache et disparaît sous le flot" (XII, p. 515). In the midst of this crumbling world, however, Hugo reveals a prodigious social revolution which has nevertheless taken place: "ces îles...étaient écueils, elles sont refuges" (XII, p. 535). Nearing the periphery of the

Channel Islands would previously have been a mortal hazard for those at sea, who are now welcomed into the heart of these former foes. This transition on the part of the islands from villainy to altruism is comparable to Valjean's moral conversion. Those who have threatened life sustain and even enhance it, such is their degree of positive transformation. Hugo suggests that the negative forces in the macrocosm are not omnipotent: the physiography of the reef was not sufficiently mighty to prevent it from becoming a shelter for Hugo and other exiles. Good can emerge from evil eventually.

The example of the Hanois reef shows that positive metamorphosis continues in Hugo's time: "en 1862 on a placé sur cet écueil un phare" (XII, p. 614). The transformation of this rock is as astounding as that of the Channel Islands: "c'est quelque chose comme le brigand devenu gendarme" (XII, p. 614). Valjean's conversion is recalled once more and Hugo's figurative transformation of society in Les Misérables, "de la lumière à flots" (XI, p. 536), is literalised here.[3] Not only has the Hanois reef renounced its own misdeeds, so to speak, but it prevents others from perpetrating crime by dispelling "la nuit" with its shining beams. The beneficial transformations in the Channel Islands represent a fervent affirmation of faith and optimism, because even murderers can become redeemers. And indeed the positive social metamorphoses of Les Travailleurs de la Mer are perhaps a more significant achievement than those depicted in Les Misérables. Valjean was kind to many, but he was only mortal. The welcoming Channel Islands and the Hanois lighthouse are enduring and can therefore be of benefit to countless generations. Les Travailleurs de la Mer is a testament to beneficial change, which is wrought from profound iniquity and is secured at the very vortex of the elements.

Gilliatt furthers the progressive transformation of the seascape during his rescue of the *Durande*. Like a new Vulcan, "maître du feu; de ce rocher inondé, il avait fait jaillir la flamme" (XII, p. 688), he succeeds in extracting fire from its antithesis, cold, inanimate stone, a seemingly magical feat. Gilliatt defeats the negativity and hostility of the elements by coercing them into doing industrial labour (XII, p. 688). After they had conspired to wreck the work of progress, Gilliatt humbles them by forcing them to strive for its restoration: "se faire servir par l'obstacle est un grand pas vers le triomphe" (XII, p. 687). The work of progress is wrested from chaos and can continue to be of universal benefit, but Gilliatt's real victory is in converting cosmic enemies to allies. "Le triomphe" could also apply to the fundamental battle against evil. The restitution of the *Durande* indicates considerable optimism, because nature is tamed by the singular efforts of only one of its creatures. In the struggle for progress, the desire for positive metamorphosis is of sovereign importance and it is shown to be sufficient to attain its goal.

This confidence in the war against violence and chaos is not maintained in the later novels, however, and does not even persist until the end of Les Travailleurs de la Mer. Progress is concretised in the *Durande*'s revolutionary engine, which endures. Gilliatt is the exemplary servant of beneficial change, but he is not rewarded for his efforts. Indeed, he is made to experience the exact humiliation that he had inflicted upon the elements. On the *Douvres*, he had succeeded in "se faire servir par l'obstacle", but on his return to Guernsey he discovers that he is the barrier to his beloved's happiness. He continues to be an agent of change, but he casts away all of his own hope: "lui, l'obstacle, il se changeait en providence" (XII, p. 784). Gilliatt, the mighty transformer, imposes on himself the fate that he had forced upon the elements, to change

from a resistance to a mechanism in the process of metamorphosis. Gilliatt's metamorphosis is "la catastrophe d'hier, le salut d'aujourd'hui" (XII, p. 787), a deeply ironic perception, because for the saviour of the *Durande* the situation is precisely the reverse.

Hugo remained optimistic throughout his life because of his ardent belief in the power of love and in children, and the future potential these represented.[6] These absolute sources of positive inspiration are present in L'Homme Qui Rit and in Quatrevingt-Treize, but they are also touched by negativity. In L'Homme Qui Rit, the monster and the blind girl, the two characters who lead the least enviable of lives, nevertheless provide the most hope. Love has beatified the most grievously afflicted, so it must have the capacity to similarly transform all of mankind: "avec leur enfer ils avaient fait du ciel; telle est votre puissance, amour!" (XIV, p. 189). Love transcends and redeems in L'Homme Qui Rit, but the love between Gwynplaine and Dea has several negative aspects. Hugo qualifies their relationship as a work of nature: "elle a le lierre pour les pierres et l'amour pour les hommes" (XIV, p. 188). This comparison is highly ambiguous, because ivy is suggestive of poison, restricting twines and it is often found in graveyards. Such an analogy is rendered even more disquieting because it is followed by the statement: "générosité profonde de l'ombre" (XIV, p. 188). This terse remark perhaps refers to the impairments of the lovers, which cause their society to reject them but are also the exact reason for their bliss with one another: "quel bonheur pour Dea que Gwynplaine fût hideux! Quelle chance pour Gwynplaine que Dea fût aveugle!" (XIV, p. 189). There is profound irony in the circumstance where deformity and blindness are defined as joy and good fortune.

Love is a transformational power throughout Hugo's work, but the relationship between Gwynplaine and Dea clearly diverges from that of

lovers in previous novels. Ebenezer and Déruchette flee to England to be together, but Gwynplaine is forced to depart from the world of the living in order to join Dea. The relationship between Gwynplaine and Dea demonstrates the good that love can achieve on earth, but it is also testament to the existence of everlasting life. Gwynplaine's final words reveal that Dea lives on and is beckoning him to join her: "il murmurait: Sois tranquille. Je te suis. Je distingue très bien le signe que tu me fais" (XIV, p. 384). Gwynplaine and Dea are thus the affirmation that love does not perish with the flesh.

The beneficial transformation which love has brought to his adopted children is celebrated by Ursus in *Chaos vaincu.*[7] This "drame-poëme" (XIV, p. 201) is a tense fusion of the real and the unreal.[8] It dramatises and makes visible the existent love between Gwynplaine and Dea but its theatricality enables them both to escape the ostracism they must endure offstage. Dea's inability to see is not recognised. She appears as the embodiment of the intangible and ethereal: "silhouette de clarté dans de l'aurore. La voix, c'était elle" (XIV, p. 199). Whilst Gwynplaine is in the darkness of the unlit auditorium, the audience share Dea's actual obliviousness to her beloved's deformity and Gwynplaine is perceived as "un homme" (XIV, p. 198) and not as a monster. The unreality of the theatre enables them both to change positively.

This beneficial metamorphosis is incomplete and only momentary, however. Ursus had cast Gwynplaine as a legendary, chivalric hero who risks his life against ferocious beasts to rescue a maiden, but this scenario is not recognised by the audience: "pour les spectateurs, l'être sauvé, c'était Gwynplaine, et l'être sauveur, c'était Dea" (XIV, p. 200).[9] Even in the obscurity of a theatrical fantasy, it is impossible for Gwynplaine to assume the identity of hero and redeemer in the eyes of his

society.

Chaos vaincu is love, but tranquillity is only temporary, whilst the blackness is unbroken. Light was the means to positive transformation in Les Misérables and in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, but in *Chaos vaincu* its function is much more ambiguous. Dea is "cette lumière" (XIV, p. 198) who has "une majesté d'astre" (XIV, p. 199) but light restores the spectators' vision which forces Gwynplaine to revert to his offstage persona.[10] "Brusquement, dans cette ombre, un jet de lumière frappait Gwynplaine en pleine face" (XIV, p. 199) and the violence of this interjecting beam incites a violent reaction in the audience. "Un soleil de rire" (XIV, p. 199) emerges and it burns with an uncontrollable ferocity towards those on stage. Light causes negative metamorphosis in *Chaos vaincu*. Gwynplaine is no longer "un homme" but "le monstre" (XIV, p. 199) and Dea's sight is also questioned, because she does not repel the figure at her feet: "on sentait qu'elle aimait son monstre. Le savait-elle monstre? Oui, puisqu'elle le touchait. Non, puisqu'elle l'acceptait" (XIV, p. 200). There is a chasm between those on stage and their spectators: "Dea...était prête à pleurer de tendresse pendant qu'on se tordait de rire" (XIV, p. 201). "L'amour vrai" (XIV, p. 200) between Gwynplaine and Dea is perceived as an impossibility by the audience because he is so hideous.[11] Ursus attempts to dismiss the reaction to his "oeuvre capitale" (XIV, p. 198), but he nevertheless detects the audience's lack of respect: "il eût préféré plus de sourire et moins de rire" (XIV, p. 201). This spectacle fails to be a didactic manifestation of the beneficial power of love. The felicity of Gwynplaine and Dea remains, but their isolation returns.

Chaos vaincu is easily vanquished because its spectators prefer the chaos of "la joie" to love.[12] Dea is "heureuse" (XIV, p. 201) whilst all around her are agitated and "joyeux" (XIV, p. 201). *Chaos vaincu* ends in

chaos, therefore. At the end of this chapter, 'Extravagances que les gens sans goût appellent poésie', Hugo recalls the boxing match between Helmsgail and Phelem-ghe-Madone (XIV, p. 201), which also ends in chaos. The gentle exchange between Gwynplaine and Dea contrasts with the vicious blows dealt by the boxers. Critics have consistently compared *Chaos vaincu* to the fight between the two Celts:

> "son [L'Homme Qui Rit] spectacle, c'est ce <<noble match>> où Helmsgail défigure Pelem-ghe-Madone (*sic.*), et dont la description précède immédiatement celle de Chaos vaincu où <<le défiguré se transfigure>>".[13]

Is Hugo reminding us that the bout resulted in a knock-out, or K.O., which has the same pronunciation as 'chaos' in French?[14] *Chaos vaincu* pays tribute to love but it cannot inspire further changes for the good, because those for whom it is written are devoted to chaos. Its author's vainglorious claim "Chaos vaincu est Chaos vainqueur" (XIV, p. 217) is ambiguous. This assertion applies only in a commercial sense, because Gwynplaine's notoriety causes crowds to flock to the play. *Chaos vaincu* is defeated by its own hero, who inspires pandemonium in those for whom Ursus intended it. There is particular despondency in the defeat of *Chaos vaincu*, because the pillory is the daily reward of the altruistic players. *Chaos vaincu* is ultimately nebulous, transient and illusory. Ursus reveals the potential of love to all the populace, but they reject positive metamorphosis, as they reject Gwynplaine.

In Quatrevingt-Treize, the absolute positive force is embodied in children, who are defined by Hugo as "l'immense avenir" (XV, p. 344). The present generation of men is threatening the lives of the future generation, which is particularly represented by *les trois petits Fléchards*. René-Jean, Gros-Alain and Georgette are atoms tossed in the maelstrom of political events. These infants have been driven from their home, have no father and are deprived of their mother in a Royalist ambush.

They are utterly defenceless against all the hostile forces in the cosmos, but if they are saved then the universe cannot be entirely evil, and hope and the future are redeemed. As Pierre Albouy observes, infanticide symbolises the end of the world: "la mort des enfants, c'est l'avenir assassiné".[15] However, the *petits Fléchards* do survive, so the recovery and future glory of France are assured.

Where the message of *Chaos vaincu* had no progressive effect on its audience, the salvation of the children in Quatrevingt-Treize is the catalyst of further benevolence, but this progressive movement is not without its shadows. As one of "les hommes de la délivrance et de l'affranchissement" (XV, p. 485), Gauvain is inspired to reciprocate Lantenac's act of salvation: "quoi! ce coup de lumière serait sans contre-coup!" (XV, p. 485). At the end of *Chaos vaincu*, the ray of light illuminating Gwynplaine's monstrous face had extremely negative consequences for the players; similarly, "ce coup de lumière", Lantenac's rescue of the children, leads to disaster for Gauvain, because it inspires him to destroy himself. The "contrecoup" to "ce coup de lumière" is the dawn when Gauvain is executed, so that the "transfiguration" (XV, p. 485) which he desired is a spectacle of blood, not of light.

The redemption of the children from the flames ironically results in a twofold catastrophe for France. Gauvain liberates the man guilty of capital crimes against humanity. Lantenac rescued the children, but it was he who had left their mother for dead in Herbe-en-Pail, kidnapped them and placed them in the inferno of *la Tourgue*. Such atrocities condemn Lantenac, but his release enables him to commit even more. Saving the children does not signify that he has undergone a moral transformation. Gauvain recognises that he liberates "le meurtrier de la patrie" (XV, p. 497): "sauver Lantenac, c'était sacrifier la France; la vie de Lantenac,

c'était la mort d'une foule d'êtres innocents" (XV, p. 487). Shortly before his great-nephew allows him to escape from his cell, Lantenac makes clear that he remains devoted to the brutality of the past: "moi, j'eusse supprimé tous les gratteurs de papier" (XV, p. 492). In his preface to the Laffont edition of Quatrevingt-Treize, Yves Gohin emphasises that the ending to the novel is optimistic, because "les trois enfants vivront".[16] However, he fails to acknowledge that the ruthless Lantenac lives on also. Gohin gives the impression that Quatrevingt-Treize ends upon the joyful note of the children's rescue, "le vieux Hugo a fait jaser l'Eros qui sera vainqueur", but Hugo concludes with a scene of futile destruction.[17] Future time is thus guaranteed in the *petits Fléchards*, but it does not augur peace because Lantenac survives, and he will menace innocent children once more.

The children's redemption is doubly disastrous because of the merciful future which France loses when Gauvain destroys himself. Before his courageous act, Lantenac was the symbol of intransigent opposition to positive change. He is redeemed many times but he continues to kill, even executing the gunner who saved his life on the *Claymore*. He represents reaction and even chaos. Like the chaotic waters of the sea, "ce que le flux avait fait, le reflux allait le défaire" (XII, p. 713), Lantenac ends the life of the man who had saved all of the lives on the ship. However, Lantenac's great-nephew is so dedicated to progress that he sacrifices himself to prevent the killing of a man who has saved life only once. Gauvain reviles inclemency, but he frees a man who will continue to oppress their country with it. In the Ollendorff edition of Hugo's complete works, Quatrevingt-Treize is described as a conflict between the personifications of the past, the present and the future: "Lantenac, chef monarchique, et catholique, personnifie l'aveugle Foi, le Passé. Cimourdain...figure

l'inflexible Justice, le Présent. Gauvain...est le héros de l'idéale Miséricorde et annonce l'Avenir".[18] At the end of the novel, Cimourdain, "c'est-à-dire 93" (XV, p. 486), the sanguinary present is dead, but so is the possibility of a just future. It is the Past which lingers on. A positive future appears distant and the immediate time ahead will be bleak and violent.

The salvation of the children thus has grievous consequences, but it must be acknowledged that Gauvain's treason was inescapable. The execution of the saviour of the children would have rendered the Revolution more reactionary than the *Ancien Régime*: "du côté de la monarchie, ceux qui sauvent les enfants, et du côté de la république, ceux qui tuent les vieillards!" (XV, p. 485). Gauvain was compelled by his status and beliefs to reciprocate Lantenac's act of mercy. Nevertheless, I believe that emphasis should not be placed so much upon the rescue of the children as upon the total absence of scruples which initially condemned them to die in the fire. That extreme depravity belonged to the Royalist chief, and it is preserved with him.

In Quatrevingt-Treize, Hugo employs an industrial image to convey the progress wrought by the government of the period: "fournaise, mais forge" (XV, p. 377). The metalwork produced by a forge suggests that the benefits of the Revolution are enduring. However, men such as Gauvain are the fuel of this furnace. Hugo employed a similar metaphor to portray revolution in Les Misérables: "ce vil sable que vous foulez aux pieds, qu'on la jette dans la fournaise, qu'il y fonde et qu'il y bouillonne, il deviendra cristal splendide" (XI, p. 443). In Les Misérables, Hugo delineated the beauty which could result from popular participation in revolution, but in Quatrevingt-Treize, the emphasis is upon the hell in which men must burn in order to sustain even the distant hope of progress.

To conclude, it is only the first of the later novels which displays concrete evidence of ongoing, positive change. L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize indicate that there is no universal desire to drive towards a beneficent future. Positive forces remain, but they are rejected or are placed in jeopardy.

The relative weakness of the positive forces is additionally manifested in their failure to support the aspirations of the heroes. In his lone efforts to salvage the *Durande*, Gilliatt transforms himself from an ordinary fisherman into a legendary champion, as the allusions to Prometheus (XII, p. 704), Thor (XII, p. 688), Perseus (the octopus is "Méduse", XII, p. 742), and Hercules (from the title 'Le Labeur') suggest. However, his conquests at sea do nothing to improve his standing in Guernsey. Rejection by his beloved is exacerbated by his society's depreciation of him: "tout ce dérangement à propos d'un rien du tout comme ce Gilliatt faisait hausser les épaules aux hommes graves et aux personnes correctes" (XII, p. 779). Gilliatt has not advanced one iota since his arrival in the Channel Islands. Guernsey society then believed his relationship to his mother was that of "rien du tout" (XII, p. 559). He who gives his all to win the universally valuable is still perceived as a nothing. Ironically, it is Gilliatt's success which is the reason for his ostracism: "ce n'est toujours pas agréable d'avoir dans l'île des gens capables de faire des choses comme ça" (XII, p. 776). "On accentuait son surnom de Malin" (XII, p. 776), so that Gilliatt is confirmed as "un cambion", "le fils qu'une femme a du diable" (XII, p. 565). Gilliatt cannot break free from the inheritance of his mother's ill renown, and he is secured to her and to the tomb in which she lies. Lethierry is the sole exception to the universal repulsion of Gilliatt, "tu es mon enfant, tu es mon garçon, tu es le bon Dieu" (XII, p. 771) but even he allies his hero to

the merciless consequence of a suspect reputation: "on t'aurait brûlé il y a cent ans" (XII, p. 771). Battling relentlessly for good did not afford Gilliatt any personal positive change. Indeed, he must suffer the humiliation of appreciating that he damned himself more surely by his arduous feats than if he had remained on the island, indifferent to Lethierry's plight, like the rest of the population.

Gwynplaine is similarly recompensed with social proscription, stagnation and regression. He is first repulsed by the female spectators who derive instant amusement from his face but suffer his grotesqueness for a moment only: "après quoi, une fois le rire refroidi, Gwynplaine, pour une femme, était insupportable à voir et impossible à regarder" (XIV, p. 183). Women only selfishly derive pleasure from Gwynplaine's mutilated, risible face; they have no interest in him as a man. Gwynplaine is condemned to a life of celibacy and this sexual paralysis is a metaphor for a total inability to progress. In Corleone-Lodge, Gwynplaine contemplates enlightening the members of the House of Lords: "il leur apparaîtra comme le porte-flambeau, car il leur montrera la vérité...Quel triomphe!" (XIV, p. 285). Gwynplaine envisages being transformed into Prometheus, like his predecessor on the *Douvres*, but he attains only his agonies. Gwynplaine's desire for universal improvement does not bring him any personal benefit. The ludicrous face that negates his true disposition and that is reviled by all, is immutable:

> "lui qui a voulu être 'le lord des pauvres', parler pour 'tous les taciturnes désespérés', il restait l'homme qui fait rire, qui rit lui-même, il constate 'l'immensité inutile de son effort'".[19]

In this article, Guy Robert goes on to comment: "le rire qui l'accueillait devant le Green-Box, 'le fêtait'; ici, 'il l'exterminait'".[20] Gilliatt and Gwynplaine discover that striving for the good of their fellow men furthers only their knowledge, providing them with the bitter appreciation

that they cannot change for the better.

Gauvain's expression of humanitarianism condemns him to death more decisively than that of his predecessor. In his condemned cell, Gauvain muses "l'homme est fait, non pour traîner des chaînes, mais pour ouvrir des ailes...Je veux que le ver de terre se change en une fleur vivante, et s'envole" (XV, p. 504). Gauvain's contemplation is interrupted by the sound of the construction of his scaffold. Gauvain is able to fulfil his desire of flying away, but only after his execution and the suicide of his mentor: "et ces deux âmes...s'envolèrent ensemble" (XV, p. 509). Hugo perhaps suggests that mortality is too imperfect to realise the ideal. Gauvain thanked Cimourdain for freeing him from the shackles of the *Ancien Régime*: "j'étais né noué" (XV, p. 501). However, this statement could also refer to a predetermined fate. Cimourdain supplanted royalism with republicanism, inspiring in Gauvain the Revolutionary ideals which compelled him to liberate his great-uncle: "si j'ai la notion du devoir, c'est de vous qu'elle me vient" (XV, p. 501). The death warrant for the crime of allowing "l'évasion d'un rebelle prisonnier" (XV, p. 497) was ratified by Gauvain and is signed by his own hand. Like Gilliatt and Gwynplaine, Gauvain, the clement bringer of progress, condemns himself.

This treatment of the heroes appears particularly cruel because they are the advocates of positive transformation, but Hugo discloses that there is no consideration of justice in the arbitrary dynamic of metamorphosis.

Essentially, negative forces are stronger in the later novels. Lethierry's steamer and the Hanois lighthouse are tangible confirmation of the advance towards progress in the nineteenth century, but in L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize there are no such splendent technological successes. Indeed, the lighthouse in L'Homme Qui Rit awards the *comprachicos* a foretaste of hell: "à ces antiques phares-là...Les oiseaux y

accouraient, attirés par la clarté, s'y précipitaient et tombaient dans le brasier où on les voyait sauter, espèces d'esprits noirs agonisant dans cet enfer" (XIV, p. 94). The depiction of the Casquets lighthouse indicates Hugo's concentration upon negativity, because a modern facility was established there much more readily than at Les Hanois.[21] After Les Travailleurs de la Mer, intellect and science are not being employed to better the human condition. Indeed, in Quatrevingt-Treize, the invention which epitomises the latest *Anno Domini* is far from humanitarian. The *guillotine* is designed to abbreviate human life, not improve it.

The need for beneficial change is suggested by the regressive eras in which L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize are set. The seventeenth century England of L'Homme Qui Rit is highly reactionary. England had been progressive before all other countries, cleansing itself of the scourge of monarchy, but it embraces a king more firmly than before: "cette royauté née d'une révolution" (XIV, p. 154). This régime is shown to be harsher than the untamed cosmos of Les Travailleurs de la Mer. Although created by man, there is no compassion for the citizens of this society: "les magistrats se montraient féroces par tradition, et la cruauté était de routine" (XIV, p. 38). Everywhere in this realm, justice is no more than institutionalised injustice. *La Cave Pénale* into which Gwynplaine is taken has many counterparts, "ces caves abondaient en Angleterre" (XIV, p. 257), which demonstrates that England adheres to the ancient practice of gratuitous torture: "dans cette dernière chambre, il y a une cheminée en-cas pour la chauffe des fers. Toutes les prisons du temps du King John, et la geôle de Southwark en était une, avaient leur cave pénale" (XIV, pp. 257-258). King John allowed the barons to oppress the peasants, and his barbarism has been perpetuated for five centuries. That twelfth century savagery continues to be inflicted upon the people of the seventeenth

century manifests a desperate need for change. However, there is no prospect of a more democratic future because the sadism of the law is increasing and will be inherited by the generations of lawgivers to come: "les juges d'inquisition pullulaient. Jeffrys avait fait des petits" (XIV, p. 38). England is not developing and progressing towards the age of the Enlightenment. It is stagnant. In L'Homme Qui Rit, time and civilisation have been arrested.

After the chronological regression between Les Travailleurs de la Mer and L'Homme Qui Rit, years pass between L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize. Yet the Enlightened age which liberated France has introduced 1793, an explosion of tyranny. The Revolution has been succeeded by a more ancient and despotic régime. The seven forests in the domain of the Marquis de Lantenac (XV, p. 334) suggest the seven hills surrounding Rome, whose Empire fell into a pandemonium of slaughter and vice. The martyrdom of Saint Barthélemy, which is re-enacted by the children, originally took place in 49 A.D., under the reign of the Emperor Claudius. In the treacherous atmosphere of the *Convention*, the parallel between the decline of Ancient Rome and the Terror is fully appreciated by some of its most influential members:

> "-Mon médecin me commande les bains, répondit Marat.
> -Il faut se défier des bains, reprit Chabot. Sénèque est mort dans un bain.
> Marat sourit:-Chabot, il n'y a pas ici de Néron.
> -Il y a toi, dit une voix rude. C'était Danton qui passait" (XV, p. 382).

Danton's interjection establishes Marat as the principal instigator of evil, rather than its helpless victim. The allusion to the old teacher who is murdered by his unscrupulous protégé connotes the perfidy of the age, but also suggests the eradication of former honour by an insurgent, new malevolence. The depiction of Marat both as Seneca and Nero suggests that there is a virulent potential for self-destruction within post-

Revolutionary France. The glory of the era of 'Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité' is blighted by the depraved and despotic rule which has been allowed to supplant it. Nothing has been learned from history, because the Roman Empire collapsed and the triumphs of the Revolution are in danger. Quatrevingt-Treize reveals a France which is not consolidating its achievements and aspiring towards a promising future, but one which has degenerated, perpetrating crimes that have already been committed and which destroyed another civilisation.

Time has marched on from the seventeenth century of L'Homme Qui Rit and yet the more modern age is shown to be revivifying an epoch more distant and more terrible than that even of the early Middle Ages. Change has occurred since the Revolution, but it is entirely for the worse. By implication, the reactionary bloodshed of the Terror warns of the need for ceaseless movement towards progress.

It goes without saying that Hugo condemned the brutality of the past and unremittingly strove towards a brighter and more just future for all. Headings in L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize, 'Eternelle présence du passé' and 'Affreux comme l'antique' bear witness to the difficulty of banishing the obstinate past, and evoke its horrors. The most interesting feature of iniquitous, lingering history is in Hugo's determination to render it pertinent to his contemporary time. That Stuart England of the seventeenth century is an allegory of the nineteenth century France of Louis-Napoleon has already been noted.[22] Hardquanonne's punishment could also be carried out "même aujourd'hui, car toutes ces lois-là existent toujours" (XIV, p. 258). England is thus condemned by Hugo for not having abandoned its obsolete laws. The reactionary nature of England is innate. At the beginning of L'Homme Qui Rit, Hugo also criticises his contemporaries for being scarcely less brutal than their forbears: "les

hommes étaient un peu plus des loups qu'ils ne sont aujourd'hui. Pas beaucoup plus" (XIV, p. 37).[23] In Quatrevingt-Treize, Hugo's depiction of the treatment of defeated soldiers in the Terror was no doubt influenced by the bloody events of the Commune: "les fusillés tombaient dans la fosse parfois vivants, on les enterrait tout de même. Nous avons revu ces moeurs" (XV, p. 393).[24] The bitter euphemism "moeurs", depicting such savagery as refinement, indicates that although time has progressed since 1793, human behaviour has not. Moreover, these butchered prisoners were republicans, so that like their Communard descendants, they were fighting for equality. Hugo demonstrates that the struggle for a better future continues, but evil is nevertheless more virulent.

What is most remarkable, however, is that Hugo sought to associate the time of his contemporary reader with history at its most criminal. In the previous quotations from L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize, the adverbs "toujours", "aujourd'hui" and the pronoun "nous" unite narrator, his narratee and the related eras. In his final two novels, Hugo seems to have become convinced that the urge within man to harm and to even kill his fellows is an indelible one. In his article in L'Homme Qui Rit ou la Parole-Monstre de Victor Hugo, C.W. Thompson draws our attention to an observation in Hugo's preparatory notes for L'Homme Qui Rit: "un certain mauvais fond humain est presque irréductible".[25] Even though his personal vision of a bright future never failed, in L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize, Hugo forces his readers to acknowledge the fundamentally regressive nature of much political action in their century.[26] His final two novels anticipate a future in which the quest for good persists, but evil does not diminish.

In Les Misérables and Les Travailleurs de la Mer, scientific discoveries were making substantial improvements to the masses, but in

Quatrevingt-Treize, countless lives are being expended, merely in the name of progress, without any significant change being won for society. In Hugo's final two novels, progress has become highly elusive and extremely costly. Progress is thwarted by a cyclical dynamic which insists upon reiterating former catastrophes, so that time is chaotic. Hugo does not illustrate the eventual, positive outcome, but the relentless cruelty of negative forces. Before any dawn, the night is very long and harsh.

A Destabilised World

The great achievement of the Revolution could not prevent the Terror from succeeding it. Instability permeates Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize, as the impermanence of positive transformation demonstrates. In his article 'Du rire romantique à l'espace éclaté: sur L'Homme Qui Rit et Le Coeur du Pitre de Rimbaud', (RHLF, 1991, no: 2), C.W. Thompson testifies to "un espace en métamorphose constante" (p. 214) and his observation also aptly portrays the environment of Les Travailleurs de la Mer and Quatrevingt-Treize. The universe of the later novels is thus a highly volatile one, where space is fluid, time is fleeting and one state can instantly be exchanged for another. The world will not desist from fluctuating, nor from rearranging all entities within it.

The openings of the later novels indicate a vast divergence between the universe of the earlier novels and that of their successors. Notre-Dame de Paris begins by immersing the reader in the Paris of 1482: "ce n'est cependant pas un jour dont l'histoire ait gardé souvenir que le 6 janvier 1482. Rien de notable dans l'événement qui mettait ainsi en branle, dès le matin, les cloches et les bourgeois de Paris" (IV, p. 25). The location at the opening of Les Misérables is unequivocally the provincial France of the early nineteenth century. The beginnings of these

two novels are informative and they reassure the reader with the recognisable detail they provide. However, in the later novels, Hugo seems intent on disorienting his reader. L'Archipel de la Manche surrounds the reader with a crumbling macrocosm (XII, p. 515) and the past tense of the historical era has been replaced with the present tense, so the reader must appreciate that this mutability is contemporaneous to him: "l'Atlantique ronge nos côtes" (XII, p. 515). Moreover, the reader cannot separate himself from this unstable world, because Hugo asserts that "nos côtes", "notre falaise" and "nos ports" are being diminished (XII, p. 515).

The historical dates and named towns and cities at the beginnings of Notre-Dame de Paris and Les Misérables provide a fixed location in time and space for the reader, but he has no such secure anchors in L'Homme Qui Rit, or Quatrevingt-Treize. Space is immediately destabilised by the first character in L'Homme Qui Rit. Ursus has no settled milieu because he is a vagabond. The reader finds himself in an enigmatic area in which Ursus wanders between "des places publiques d'Aberystwith *(sic.)*, aux places publiques de Yeddburg" (XIV, p. 33). Moreover, the repetition of "de pays en pays, de comté en comté, de ville en ville" (XIV, p. 33) conveys circular, aimless journeying because Ursus continually moves towards an indistinct somewhere which is merely the repetition of its nameless predecessor, so that somewhere is inextricable from nowhere. Insecurity abounds because of the questionable movement within this confusing universe and it is increased by the imprecise time. There is a suggestion of seventeenth century England, (XIV, p. 35), but there is no specific bearing such as 1482 or 1815. Indeterminate historical and geographical location immediately envelop the reader in an atmosphere of doubt and uncertainty. As C.W. Thompson explains, "aux yeux du lecteur cette transformation de l'espace en un champ mouvant de forces le rend fort instable".[27]

There is also actual physical instability in the later novels. Barriers of classification have been eroded. Elements merge, becoming indistinguishable from one another and antitheses will readily adopt the properties of their opposite. At the beginning of Quatrevingt-Treize, the historical setting is established in the title, but the definiteness of time is not affirmed by the initial topography. The title 'En mer' causes the reader to anticipate a vast, blue, mobile environment that is open to the sky, but on the contrary he finds that he is very much on *terra firma*, in *Le bois de la Saudraie*, in the dark depths of a forest. The two divergent geographical areas are indistinguishable, stripped of their individual identities, so that 'land' and 'sea' are no longer meaningful distinctions. At the periphery of the novel, this physical insecurity instils apprehension in the reader and prefigures the turmoil occurring in the midst of these two milieux with the ambush of Michelle Fléchard and the vandalism of the cannon. Identity, integrity and difference are highly problematical in the later novels.

Divisions between species have also been obliterated. In L'Homme Qui Rit, the vagrant who belongs to no 'pays' and no era, is a man by the name of 'Bear' and his companion 'Man' is a wolf. Humankind can no longer be distinguished from the wild animal, so that humanity is dissipated and the wolf appears more kindly than man. It could be argued that Ursus chooses to destabilise his own environment, but in his work Ursus utilises a hybrid that nature has produced: "l'herbe mandragore qui, personne ne l'ignore, est homme et femme" (XIV, p. 34). Amalgamation created by man thus only reiterates the predetermined mixtures of nature and the extreme degree of instability is illustrated because nature has actively erased the most fundamental of distinctions, that between the sexes. There is such profound unrest in the cosmos that any entity appears to be able to choose

or be made to adopt the characteristics of its antithesis.

If the precise worlds at the beginnings of Notre-Dame de Paris and Les Misérables could be said to lead their readers to expect physical security, the reverse must be true for the later novels. Notre-Dame de Paris and Les Misérables gravitate towards homeostasis, whereas their successors, and in particular L'Homme Qui Rit, hurl their readers into expanding chaos and confusion.

Instability is reinforced throughout the later novels. Physical inconstancy is manifested during the storm in Les Travailleurs de la Mer:

> "l'ouest était surprenant. Il en sortait une muraille... C'était du nuage ressemblant à du granit...Le ciel, qui de bleu était devenu blanc, était de blanc devenu gris. On eût dit une grande ardoise. La mer, dessous, terne et plombée, était une autre ardoise énorme" (XII, p. 725).

The sky can change its colour and its composition. Volatile and transparent air can acquire even the imperviousness of stone, and water is also shown to have the capacity to similarly transform itself. The indications of imminent violence in the cosmos, "ardoises", are ironically the objects with which men prevent storm waters from inundating their homes. Man is less powerful than the elements because his physical disposition is fixed; he cannot effortlessly transform his flesh into tougher matter.

In the fluid cosmos of Les Travailleurs de la Mer, even the most solid and enduring of substances is highly changeable: "rien ne change de forme comme les nuages, si ce n'est les rochers" (XII, p. 519).[20] The syntax of this sentence implies that hefty stone is more inclined towards metamorphosis than the airy clouds. There is the further indication that rock does not merely change but vanish, because the comparison suggests that the durable could transform itself into the nebulous and drift away. The elements refuse to remain within the limits of their classifications

and readily adopt other identities. As an expression of time, rock represents the permanent and the dependable, but this observation suggests that all is transient and unreliable.

Hugo reveals that even tranquillity should be a cause for alarm:

> "le bleu du ciel, la vaste douceur des mouvements de l'étendue, la sérénité du plein midi, semblait exclure toute mauvaise intention. La mer était gaie au soleil. Une caresse préalable assaisonne les trahisons. De ces caresses-là, la mer n'en est point avare" (XII, p. 697).

Cosmic harmony is therefore no more than a ruse to disarm man. Joy and comfort can no longer be derived from the universal representation of benignity, "le bleu du ciel". Serene and stormy weather become indistinct from one another, because they should both inspire trepidation. This admonishment infers that man is in a state of war with the elements. He must guard against their strategies and constantly be prepared for attack.

Nature's predilection for disorder is also to be found in the temporal powers dominating the societies of L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize. The initial geographical confusion in Quatrevingt-Treize is reinforced by the images denoting the *Convention*, which is at once "la grande cime" (XV, p. 367) and "l'Océan" (XV, p. 379). The mountain and the ocean are suggestive of pioneers, but they also connote the disasters of falling and drowning. Since the elevated mountains and the flat sea are completely at odds with each other, the extraordinary, paradoxical nature of the *Convention* is evoked. The apparently solid mass of stone is therefore unstable, because it possesses the turmoil of the waves.

In L'Homme Qui Rit, the Court is not the embodiment of England, but is a hybrid of European nations, particularly those which are the ancient enemies of England. There is a preference for Spanish names: "la mode anglaise était alors aux noms espagnols. Un des bâtards de Charles II s'appelait Carlos, comte de Plymouth" (XIV, p. 142). French is the

language of the Court, "il n'y avait de bon mot qu'en français" (XIV, p. 154), even though England is at war with France (XIV, p. 156). The hypocrisy and treachery of the Stuart monarchy is evident. The Lord-High Admiral of the Navy is at Court, but he is not English: "et elle faisait George de Danemark haut-amiral d'Angleterre" (XIV, p. 153). Moreover, his only qualification for this important post is that of being husband to the Queen. The chaotic nature of the Court is most vividly displayed by the functions of its members. High and low are inverted, and the most menial of tasks are performed by those of the highest social status: "il fut presque un moment en passe d'être nommé groom of the stole, ce qui lui eût donné le privilège de passer la chemise au roi; mais il faut pour cela être prince ou pair" (XIV, p. 141). Britain is ruled by a Court which comprises all the derangement of Babel. The Stuart monarchy constitutes anarchy. Men in the later novels are not governed by order but by the forces of disruption.

Human beings are not exempt from the instability which has broken out in the cosmos and the society of the later novels. In L'Homme Qui Rit, the ascendant abuse their power by altering themselves to inflict atrocities upon their subordinates:

> "les métamorphoses sont l'affaire des dieux...Trop d'attention impatiente les olympiens dans leurs évolutions d'amusement et de fantaisie, et un coup de tonnerre pourrait bien vous apprendre que ce taureau trop curieusement examiné par vous est Jupiter" (XIV, p. 234).

This reference of course alludes to the rape of Europa by Jupiter, whilst he was in the form of a bull (Ovid's Metamorphoses, Book II). The ordinary individual is forced to change to protect himself from this metamorphosis from above. He feigns death, a state which is beyond modification, to avoid being transmogrified by the dominant: "faites le mort, on ne vous tuera pas. Telle est la sagesse de l'insecte. Ursus la pratiquait" (XIV,

p. 234). The analogy with the insect emphasises that this metamorphosis is demeaning. While the mighty in L'Homme Qui Rit adopt any physical appearance they desire for malevolent purposes, the populace must fulfil the rôle of the living dead.

In Quatrevingt-Treize, men are obliged to change themselves physically into an even less significant state than that of insects. The *Vendéens* are forced to become animals: "réfugiés d'abord dans les forêts, puis sous la terre. Ressource des bêtes" (XV, p. 389). Moreover, death was simulated in L'Homme Qui Rit, but innumerable men bury themselves alive in Quatrevingt-Treize: "en Morbihan...on ne voyait personne, et il y avait huit mille hommes" (XV, p. 390). This underground existence was advantageous to the *Vendéens* in their war against the revolutionaries: "des jaguars ayant des moeurs de taupes" (XV, p. 390). However, the discordance between wild cats and moles suggests the abnormality of this life and the strategical preponderance costs lives nevertheless: "il y en eut qui, oubliés, moururent de faim. C'étaient d'ailleurs des maladroits qui n'avaient pas su rouvrir leurs puits" (XV, p. 391). Barriers between the animal and the human and life and death are wholly diminished. Hugo accuses "la tyrannie" (XV, p. 389) of the responsibility for this degrading erosion. This subterranean survival is not new to the Vendée of the Revolution and its aftermath: "depuis deux mille ans, le despotisme sous toutes ses espèces, la conquête, la féodalité, le fanatisme, le fisc, traquait cette misérable Bretagne éperdue; sorte de battue inexorable qui ne cessait sous une forme que pour recommencer sous l'autre" (XV, p. 389). These powers resemble the gods in L'Homme Qui Rit, because they have changed their form throughout history to maintain their brutal coercion of generations. Time is change, but it is not inclined towards changing the condition of the masses for the better. Their experience remains a "sorte

de battue inexorable". Metamorphosis is endless, but it tends not to favour the masses.

Dictated Metamorphosis

Evidently the Hugolian universe had changed since the time of Les Misérables. Society was changing for the good of all its citizens, but it forces them to change for the worse in L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize. Metamorphosis has become a demeaning but necessary resource for the people, in order that they can escape the evil metamorphosis that would have been imposed upon them mercilessly by the exterior.

It must be acknowledged that if the cosmos were rigid, change for the better would be impossible, but the instability portrayed in the later novels is predominantly negative because it involves the transformations of those who did not wish to be altered, but who were defenceless to resist. The most pernicious change is that which is imposed from the exterior and this metamorphosis is an expression of the despotism practised by vast, invincible forces such as the elements or political systems. Hugo emphasises that nothing corporeal in the universe is allowed the luxury of escape.

Liquefaction

Dictated metamorphosis is most vividly illustrated by liquefaction, because water has the capacity to permeate almost all it touches. The ruination caused by water is a theme which is continued from Les Misérables. The last section of the novel to be written was 'Waterloo', in which Hugo asserts that rain caused the defeat of Napoleon and the arrest of the Revolution (XI, p. 260). It seems almost sacreligious that something as ignoble and insignificant as rain could realise "l'écroulement d'un monde" (XI, p. 260). Moreover, these "quelques gouttes d'eau" which "de plus ou

de moins ont fait pencher Napoléon" (XI, p. 260), were the catalyst of another inundation: "toute cette herbe a été mouillée de sang" (XI, p. 259). The perfidious rain did not create a stream of water but "un ruisseau fait de sang anglais, de sang allemand et de sang français, furieusement mêlés" (XI, p. 260). The storm was not in the sky but on the battlefield. Those embroiled in the battle were filtered away beneath the ground, "un puits comblé de cadavres" (XI, p. 260). The image of the poisoned well also suggests that the obliteration of French glory was ruinous to the whole world, because the well is the symbol of life-sustaining water. In the episode of Waterloo, Hugo conveys the immensely destructive power of the microcosmic, because only a few drops of water vanquished the conqueror of Europe.

The devastation effected by water is omnipresent in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, and it occurs at varying speeds. L'Archipel de la Manche reveals that the sea is slowly reclaiming the land (XII, p. 515). It is destroying the physical foundation of human existence and threatens to engulf mankind itself. Hugo reassures with his remark that the erosion of the earth is "aujourd'hui ralenti" (XII, p. 515) but he goes on to illustrate that the sea does not need centuries to eradicate civilisation. In an outburst of violence, the sea can instantly rise up and engulf whole communities into its swollen mass: "c'est en 709, nous l'avons dit, que l'océan a arraché Jersey à la France. Douze paroisses furent englouties" (XII, p. 524). The religious demarcation "paroisses" indicates that by this action the sea has transgressed against God. The catastrophic rain that fell on Waterloo was accidental, but water in Les Travailleurs de la Mer is wilfully destructive, as the verb "arracher" suggests. The ocean reduced France, but its own powers remained undiminished so that a similar brutal appropriation could still take place. The sea is a thief and a

murderer, but it cannot be punished. The formation of the Channel Islands represents the suppression of progress by savagery. The sea is the executor of chaos.

Water seeks to extend its sway in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, invading properties that are foreign to it and damaging all. There seems to be no protection against this vandalism, not even for those with supernatural gifts. Guernsey society believes that Gilliatt's mother is a witch (XII, p. 559), but despite her supposed magic powers she is not able to grow crops to feed herself and her child: "le jardin, trop visité par la mer, ne pouvait rien produire" (XII, p. 559). Her shelter is also inadequate: "il ne pleuvait dans les chambres que par les très gros temps" (XII, p. 559). Liquefaction makes the poor poorer. By poisoning the land, seawater has blighted creative potential and the rain corrodes the structures that men build. Liquefaction is a menace to nurturing and to progress, but it is a formidable enemy because it penetrates all axes and can attack from above and below.

Water degrades morally besides disintegrating physically, as Napoleon discovered at Waterloo. Being thwarted by an inappreciable puddle or shower is a humiliating experience, but ignominy is a constant for the inhabitants of *La Jacressarde*. This place "était le logis de ceux qui ne logent pas" (XII, p. 621). It is a boarding house which drenches and freezes its tenants when they are most in need of shelter: "dans les nuits d'orage, il pleuvait sur ces pieds; dans les nuits d'hiver, il neigeait sur ces corps" (XII, p. 622). Water does not remain indifferent to the miseries of the poor: it increases its intensity and changes into icy snow to further their demise.

The district of Saint-Malo in which *la Jacressarde* is found appears to have been seized by "le cimetière océan" (XII, p. 563) which desires the

lives of those inhabiting the building. Even their street is "un ruisseau" (XII, p. 621), which runs into the grimy ditch of *la Jacressarde*. Hugo defines the wretches within as "plutôt le crachat de la société que son vomissement" (XII, p. 622), and this metaphor suggests that all the filth of the gutter is to be seen here, and the residents exist half-drowned in it. Humanity in *la Jacressarde* is not only liquefied but polluted.

The focal point of this anti-shelter is its well, the resting place for the feet of the tenants at night: "les pieds touchaient le puits" (XII, p. 622). Hugo states "tous ces pieds dormaient" (XII, p. 622), which suggests that their minds and bodies were agonisingly awake, because their feet were numb with cold, like those of the dead. This well has no relation to a provider of vivifying water. Whoever needs to drink from it is confronted with the nauseous sight: "les immondices y suintaient" (XII, p. 623). This well is also an overflowing sewer. The woebegone of *la Jacressarde* suffer the irony of living half-immersed in water, none of which is fit for human consumption. The rain and snow are their only means of quenching their thirst, but they are also murderous. Water persistently weakens men until they fall into its depths and emphasis is upon descent into the well: "le puits, sans parapet et sans couvercle, toujours béant, avait trente pieds de profondeur" (XII, p. 623). The cold, wet, tired and undernourished residents can watch a continuous, downwards stream: "la pluie y tombait...tous les ruissellements de la cour y filtraient" (XII, p. 623). This flow appears to be hypnotising its spectators into following the tumbling current.

Liquefaction in *la Jacressarde* debases its human victims so completely that they desire self-destruction. The well offers the prospect of apparent revitalisation when it is in reality an aid to suicide: "qui avait soif, y buvait. Qui avait ennui, s'y noyait" (XII, p. 623). The foul

water would surely kill its consumer, but the well offers a more preferable, rapid death, drowning. The indifference to even the lives of children was such during the society of the Restored Bourbons that "en 1819...un enfant de quatorze ans" (XII, p. 623) was pulled from this gateway to "le cimetière océan". The ruthlessness of the sea had become the model for civilisation. *La Jacressarde*'s occupants are "l'écume" "de la vague" (XII, p. 623), so that they return to the inconstant ocean that inspired their society.

In the introduction to this thesis, I emphasised that there were strong similarities between this sordid hovel and Roland's factory in de Sade's La Nouvelle Justine, particularly since the last syllable of *la Jacressarde* can be seen to deliberately recall the Marquis. The evil Roland built his counterfeiting establishment around a well, which echoes the construction of *la Jacressarde*. Moreover, Roland's slaves make the same final journey as their unfortunate counterparts in Saint-Malo:

> "quand tu seras morte à la peine, on te jettera dans le trou que tu vois, à côté du puits, avec deux cents autres coquines de ton espèce qui t'y attendent, et l'on te remplacera par une nouvelle".[29]

In both novels, the gaping well represents society's total lack of concern for its citizens. Liquefaction in *la Jacressarde* is highly sadistic in nature, inflicting slow torture upon victims without hope, because the means by which they will die (the well) is always within their sight.[30] The instant death of the parishioners in 709 A.D. seems merciful by contrast.

The destruction of the hero by water is also a protracted metamorphosis. Water is a constantly invasive presence in Gilliatt's life. It intruded into the security of his childhood home and on the *Douvres* it alters into sharp needles, as if to pierce and wound his very core: "point d'ondées, point d'averses, mais de longues aiguilles, fines, glacées,

pénétrantes, aiguës, qui perçaient les vêtements de Gilliatt jusqu'à la peau et la peau jusqu'aux os" (XII, p. 702). This rainfall is almost like a shower of thorns which bury themselves in Gilliatt. There is a determination to cause him pain and to obliterate him entirely.

However, Gilliatt has more hope and confidence than his fellow victims in *la Jacressarde*, as his triumphant "cruche!" (XII, p. 735) to the storm demonstrates. Nevertheless, water has many treacherous guises and persistently reminds Gilliatt of its presence. When he believes "rien désormais ne l'arrêtait" (XII, p. 747), he discovers a leak in "la panse", which threatens to immerse Gilliatt in its fetid contents: "la tumeur pouvait se fendre" (XII, p. 749). The image of the tumour conveys that water is a mortal menace to Gilliatt, who is preyed upon relentlessly.

Gilliatt's demise follows the same pattern as that of the destitute in *la Jacressarde*. After being endlessly attacked, the victim submits, so that the mortal sin committed is one of suicide and not murder. Suicide is an acknowledgement of the superior might of the assailant and Gilliatt kills himself in the place of slow execution that the sea deviously arranged. *La Chaise Gild-Holm-'Ur* and *la Chaise au Moine* in Alderney (XII, p. 572) mock their victims; they appear to serve men, being in the form of comfortable items of furniture, and yet they gradually deprive them of their life. Gilliatt commits his body to a certain killer and he also awaits the tide, which brings regular liquefaction. The final irony for Gilliatt is that he has rescued several people from *la Chaise Gild-Holm-'Ur*, including his rival. The final words of the novel, "il n'y eut plus rien que la mer" (XII, p. 793), bitterly proclaim the supremacy of the sea. The liquefaction of Gilliatt is as cruel as that of the forlorn in *la Jacressarde*, because he was allowed to hope that he would survive.

Water has become a sophisticated executioner in Les Travailleurs de la

Mer. It ridicules and subjugates its victims before their death. The liquefaction of the hero manifests that those who believe they can evade metamorphosis being imposed upon them delude themselves.

Petrification

Subsequently, the interminable disintegration of water is replaced in L'Homme Qui Rit with the imposition of a rapid, negative metamorphosis.[31] Nature, society and men petrify, an act often irrevocable once enforced. The victim of liquefaction endured a humiliating, gradual demise, but petrification is the brutal strike of the unexpected. Liquefaction was ceaseless mobility, diluting and absorbing matter into its current, but petrification is sudden paralysis. It is a change which is imposed to prevent change and which seeks the stillness of the grave.

Nature embodied metamorphosis in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, because of its changing seasons (XII, p. 599, p. 789). However, L'Homme Qui Rit seems to have been gripped by the coldness and darkness of a permanent winter, as the chapter titles indicate: 'Bataille entre la mort et la nuit'; 'Nix et nox'; 'L'Enfant dans l'ombre'; 'Effet de neige'; 'Frémissement'; 'La Mer et la nuit'. Water executed transformations in Les Travailleurs de la Mer but in L'Homme Qui Rit it has been abruptly stopped. Negative metamorphosis in Les Travailleurs de la Mer was the corrosion of an invasive current, but the freeze in L'Homme Qui Rit is so severe that nature appears to threaten that water may never flow again. "La pénible année 1690 dépassa en rigueur même les hivers célèbres du commencement du dix-septième siècle" (XIV, p. 54). The allusion to the past suggests that advancement is being arrested: "une bise opiniâtre du nord souffla sans discontinuer sur le continent européen" (XIV, p. 53), as if the unsunned north were trying to extend its sombre iciness to the whole of Europe.

This winter is especially harsh in England (XIV, p. 53), but no

anxiety is aroused in its people. The freezing of 'la Tamise' conveys the extremity of petrification, because its name suggests the verb 'tamiser', 'to filter'. The insanity of the late Stuart society is betrayed by its response to the glaciation of the river upon which its capital stands: "les chariots roulèrent sur la rivière gelée; il y eut sur la Tamise foire avec tentes, et combats d'ours et de taureaux; on y rôtit un boeuf entier sur la glace. Cette épaisseur de glace dura deux mois" (XIV, p. 54). Despite the duration of the intense cold, this seizure was not a time of concern but a time of rejoicing for the English. The baiting of bulls and bears displays their desire to spill blood, and their indifference that life-sustaining water has been turned to stone. These mortal fights between beasts indicate that the English sought to aggravate the hostility of nature. Whilst the severe winter is being celebrated in carnival tents and with lavish feasts on the ice, the homeless are abandoned and left exposed to the elements: "de longues listes d'indigents trouvés morts de famine et de nudité sont encore lisibles aujourd'hui" (XIV, p. 53). Although the festivals have long disappeared, the damning evidence of English pitilessness has survived. This was the winter which killed a poor mother and blinded her baby, Dea. The inclemency of the elements in 1690 is a metaphor for the mercilessness of the people at that time. The severity of the winter in England suggests that its people were particularly depraved.

There is a proclivity towards petrification in the cosmos and in the human society of L'Homme Qui Rit. The Stuart monarchy indulges in the physical transmogrification of individuals, who are not intended to be able to ever rid themselves of the metamorphosis imposed upon them. The *comprachicos* petrified their victims, because they turned flesh into stone: "on ne sait plus sculpter en pleine chair humaine" (XIV, p. 46). In China, some human creations became the ceramic in which they had been forced to

grow: "on casse le vase, l'enfant en sort, et l'on a un homme ayant la forme d'un pot. C'est commode; on peut d'avance se commander son nain de la forme qu'on veut" (XIV, p. 49). There, as in Hugo's Stuart England, petrification is a highly profitable activity because the victim is deprived of an identity and of a rightful livelihood: "défigurer vaut mieux que tuer" (XIV, p. 48). However, there is also the suggestion that life has been made dreadfully longer for a victim such as Gwynplaine, who provides his manufacturers with the sadistic pleasure of knowing that he is not one of the "bateleurs difformes" who "courent les rues" (XIV, p. 48), but a disinherited lord. For some, the process of being transmogrified expended all of their childhood years, but for others, like Gwynplaine, metamorphosis was rapid: "des brûlures par le soufre et des incisions par le fer" (XIV, p. 48). Whilst nature is frozen, a human being is burned and he is subsequently petrified for eternity. Moreover, in order to create the most grotesque of monsters, the *comprachicos'* victims are children, so that those with the most development ahead of them are irrevocably petrified. This negative metamorphosis demanded by the monarchy is a crime against humanity and against progress itself.

The monarchy is devoted to the instant physical ruin inflicted by the branding iron. Hugo had personally witnessed this barbaric form of corporal punishment. In La Prison Romantique, (p. 96), Victor Brombert draws our attention to Hugo's presence at the branding of a woman in 1818, and to his avowal in 1862 that he could still hear her screams:

> "j'ai encore dans l'oreille, après plus de quarante ans, et j'aurai toujours dans l'âme l'épouvantable cri de la suppliciée. Pour moi, c'était une voleuse, ce fut une martyre. Je sortis de là déterminé - j'avais seize ans - à combattre à jamais les mauvaises actions de la loi" (XII, p. 866).

These "mauvaises actions de la loi" are almost routine and ubiquitous in L'Homme Qui Rit.

The treachery of royalty is manifested because they have devised legislation to persecute the *comprachicos* they employ. However, a certain degree of justice does seem to exist, since their punishment, mutilation by fire, recalls their crime: "le fer et le feu étaient dans le code. La loi pratiquait la cautérisation du vagabondage" (XIV, p. 51). Four branding irons have been created for the visible, upper part of their bodies, with two reserved for their hands, which had performed the evil surgery. The *comprachicos'* castigation is enduring, so that they are petrified, like their victims. They are transformed into walking lexigraphies, with every brand testifying to a particular heinous deed: "les hommes de cette affiliation...devaient être marqués sur l'épaule d'un fer chaud imprimant un R, qui signifie *rogue*, c'est-à-dire gueux; sur la main gauche d'un T, signifiant *thief*, c'est-à-dire voleur; et sur la main droite d'un M, signifiant *man-slay*, c'est-à-dire meurtrier" (XIV, p. 52). This punishment is rapid, but the brands are indelible, so that society will always be able to appreciate that these marked people have committed atrocities. The branding iron is not the instrument of justice, however, but the arbitrary tool of petrification, the king's toy.

When a king chooses to admit his complicity in the *comprachicos'* deeds, the result is yet more torture: "le défiguré était fleurdelysé; on lui ôtait la marque de Dieu, on lui mettait la marque du roi" (XIV, p. 49). This statement indicates that the King is antithetical to God and therefore satanic. The theft of a child is compounded by the infliction of a hideous scar that is his insignia: "Jacob Astley, chevalier et baronnet, seigneur de Melton, constable dans le comté de Norfolk, eut dans sa famille un enfant vendu, sur le front duquel le commissaire vendeur avait imprimé au fer chaud une fleur de lys" (XIV, p. 49). The king's confession of guilt ironically enables him to once more indulge in petrifying the living. It

is better for the transmogrified to act as if they are stone, to remain silent and pray that their creator does likewise, so that the searing iron will not add to the loss of their family. Justice in the society of the Stuarts resembles that of hell.

The wapentake is the embodiment of instant, negative metamorphosis that is imposed from the exterior.[32] "L'iron-weapon" (XIV, p. 245) that he carries possesses the punitive nature of the royal sceptre: "les grands, si bon leur semble, nous donnent des coups de bâton...Vénérons le sceptre qui est le premier des bâtons" (XIV, p. 221). The wapentake is a silent figure in black, the personification of the stick he carries, emphasising that English law enacts perpetual petrification. His muteness suggests his own imperviousness, and he is the Medusa's head of Stuart England: "sous ce rigide attouchement de la loi, Gwynplaine eut une secousse, puis fut comme pétrifié" (XIV, p. 245). The implication is that Stuart England inflicts archaic, arbitrary punishment.

Despite his stony countenance and the initial petrification that he inflicts, the wapentake's touch ironically demands immediate mobility (XIV, p. 222). He strikes unexpectedly and the transformation he prescribes is often irrevocable. His intrusion represents a final severance for his victim and the name "wapentake" communicates separation, because it is an "ancient geographical division".[33] He has the power to abduct an individual, who may never be returned to his family, because the touch of "l'iron-weapon" signifies that more brutal blows await the subject in the torture chamber. This servant of stone enables the king to permeate his malevolence throughout his realm.

The wapentake resembles the figure of the Commendatore in Don Giovanni. He is also reminiscent of the Grim Reaper or Chiron, transporting someone from the world of the living to the world of the dead,

as his apparel indicates: "vêtements couleur deuil" (XIV, p. 246). He does indeed bring death to Gwynplaine because his "bâton de fer" (XIV, p. 246) transforms this "bateleur" into "Lord Fermain Clancharlie" (XIV, p. 265). Like the child of Jacob Astley, Gwynplaine's royal punishment is twofold. After being disfigured by the iron instruments of the *comprachicos* (XIV, p. 48), he is transformed by the metal thyrsus of the wapentake. The latter's abduction of Gwynplaine therefore appears particularly cruel, but it emphasises that the monarch's desire for petrification cannot be satiated.

Gwynplaine is not physically altered by the wapentake, but he is injured psychologically by him. The wapentake petrifies the mind behind the face that was ravaged by the *comprachicos*. Gwynplaine has no conception of his original appearance, "sa tête vivait et son visage était mort. Il ne se souvenait pas de l'avoir vu" (XIV, p. 185), and the intervention of the wapentake causes himm to be deprived of the self to which he has become accustomed: "c'était bien à lui qu'on parlait; mais lui-même était autre" (XIV, p. 279).[39] As a lord, Gwynplaine's attire is "brodé" (XIV, p. 279), like his face, but his self-recognition has disappeared. His absence of self-appreciation mirrors his lack of discernment about his fate. He deludes himself when he believes that his tribulations have come to an end (XIV, p. 283). His insistence "j'existerai" (XIV, p. 283) suggests that he is not alive and Barkilphedro asserts "mylord, Gwynplaine est mort" (XIV, p. 281). Gwynplaine is also warned that if he does not wish to live as Clancharlie, he will not be allowed to live: "il est aisé de vous effacer" (XIV, p. 281). Gwynplaine cannot revert and change will end his life. The wapentake has effectively killed Gwynplaine, and yet he still lives. He is a petrified soul, who is forced to live an alien existence. Gwynplaine is condemned to subsist as a fantom, like the hanged man whom he encountered as a boy. The wapentake

inflicts an abrupt, immediate transformation which results in perpetual suffering.

It is possible to refuse being metamorphosed by the wapentake, but it is an evasion which leads to the scaffold: "on est pendu" (XIV, p. 222). However, death does not provide any shield against petrification, so avoidance of the wapentake's powers would merely be a postponement of transformation. From the sardonically named "l'arbre d'invention humaine" hangs "on ne sait quoi de noir et d'informe" (XIV, p. 64), which was once a human being.[33] His execution seems to have been carried out with some speed and impatience, because his shoes were not removed until they fell from his corpse. He is barefoot, like the boy who stands observing him in the snow: "l'enfant, pieds nus, regarda ces souliers" (XIV, p. 66). Society in L'Homme Qui Rit is determined to erode; both the child and the hanged man are stripped of their protective footwear and the suspended figure has been deprived of life and dignity.

In spite of the rapidity with which his life was expended, care has been taken to ensure that the hanged man will not fade into oblivion as quickly. His shapeless mass has been "emmaillotée comme un enfant" (XIV, p. 64), but in tar, not in respectable linen. He has been transformed into an anachronism, a living fossil, "c'était ce qui n'est plus" (XIV, p. 64). He has been put to death, but he does not disappear. The body which has had life extracted from it must persist nevertheless: "la tête, penchée, avait un air d'attention" (XIV, p. 66). Ironically, tar is impermeable but it does not even rudely protect the hanged man: "sa moelle n'était plus dans ses os, ses entrailles n'étaient plus dans son ventre" (XIV, p. 64). Hugo's hanged man strongly resembles that described by Baudelaire in Un Voyage à Cythère.[34] Tar has prolonged the existence of the hanged man's body so that he must tolerate all the degradations of being relentlessly

pillaged by the elements, and he has seasonal metamorphoses to endure also: "il tombait en cendre l'été et en boue l'hiver" (XIV, p. 64). The cruelty of not being able to wither away is manifested on the face of *le pendu*: "le goudron donnait à cette face un aspect mouillé. Des gouttes de bitume figées dans ce qui avait été les yeux ressemblaient à des larmes" (XIV, pp. 66-67). His fellow men do not cease from treating him pitilessly, so the hanged man shows pity for himself.

Le pendu is only one of the countless unfortunate figures dominating the English coastline. They are intended to act as a diabolic inversion of a lighthouse, deterring smugglers from landing: "le pendu tenait lieu de lanterne. Il éclairait, à sa façon, ses camarades les contrebandiers" (XIV, p. 67). These gibbet lighthouses indicate that this is not an enlightened civilisation. Furthermore, "cela n'empêchait point la contrebande; mais l'ordre se compose de ces choses-là" (XIV, p. 67). This "ordre" is chaos, in which the rent flesh of hanged men enriches the soil: "la terre se nourrit de l'homme" (XIV, p. 67), rather than the reverse. Innumerable men are "supplicié" (XIV, p. 67) like *le pendu*, and their suffering is futile because smugglers are not dissuaded from their trade. No good comes from this legitimate evil.

English society firmly adheres to petrification. There is no prospect of respite for the abject figure of *le pendu* because he is repeatedly coated with tar (XIV, p. 66). This policy is not only futile but gratuitous and scorns humanity. The natural change of decomposition is not allowed to supplant imposed, synthetic metamorphosis. The hanged man is not even allowed the distant hope of falling to his rest on the ground, because he is not suspended by the original rope which asphyxiated him. He hangs from an unyielding chain: "chaîne marine aux anneaux à demi pleins" (XIV, p. 64). The naval chain suggests that the chaos of the sea is being

recreated on firm ground in England, and it reinforces the petrification caused by the tar. After being condemned to death, the hanged man is condemned to perpetual torment. This imprisoning shackle performs a murderous function like its predecessor rope. The chain calls the vultures to attack the hanged man: "la chaîne qui grinçait, cria...Si c'était un appel, il fut obéi" (XIV, p. 68) and then it prevents him from escaping their talons.

The most disquieting aspect of this petrified corpse is not that he is obliged to linger but that he is still forced to die: "effrayant supplice continuant après la vie" (XIV, p. 69). Moreover, this agony after life recalls that of Prometheus: "les oiseaux, effrayés, s'envolèrent...Puis ils revinrent" (XIV, p. 68). Ironically, this moment of death supplies the hanged man with intense life, "le mort sembla pris d'une vie monstrueuse" (XIV, pp. 68-69), as if dying were the only living that is desired by this society. Hugo indicates that "on n'avait pas tenu à le garder vivant, mais on tenait à le conserver mort" (XIV, p. 67). However, it is the greater cruelty of dying continually which England inflicts upon the hanged man. Its predilection for the throes of death is evoked in its decision to hang one man four times: "*je l'ai pendu quatre fois,* dit Kirke satisfait. Les supplices recommencés sont un grand signe de force dans le pouvoir" (XIV, p. 139).

There is certainly no compassion in the cosmos, because this man who had his life so brutally terminated is allowed no peace after death. "Mis là par l'homme, il attendait Dieu" (XIV, p. 65), but frenzied, ruthless forces descend upon his body once more. Humanity and carrion eaters are left swirling in a dance of death, one hardly distinct from the other, a profoundly negative metamorphosis: "le mort se tordait, la troupe d'oiseaux roulait sur lui en spirale. C'était un tournoiement dans un tourbillon"

(XIV, p. 69). The determination to destroy dominates the universe and extends even to that which is already dead.

Petrification in L'Homme Qui Rit compares with liquefaction in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, because both seek to inflict endless anguish. There is inequity between the speed with which petrification is imposed and the eternity endured by the subject of this metamorphosis, but defencelessness against the unexpected is accentuated. All of the hideous petrifications in Stuart society are legitimate; the branded face of a disfigured child and tarred corpses are testaments to English justice. English law is unlawful, and disdains life, nature and humanity. It is a petrified relic and intends to similarly convert people. However, this mercilessness is not limited to the English alone. "On tenait à conserver mort" the hanged man (XIV, p. 63), but "on" is defined as the non-specific "le genre humain" (XIV, p. 63). Hugo thus envisions a terrifying humankind which is devoted to death, not to life.

Incineration and Dispersion

Instant and negative metamorphosis is still imposed upon men in Quatrevingt-Treize, but its power has considerably intensified. It no longer transforms an individual, but scores of individuals at a time. Perpetual torment is no longer sought, but this does not render the prescribed change any more positive. It seeks to eradicate entirely.

The determination to incinerate has pervaded France. Smoke can represent the nurturing "foyer" (XV, p. 335), but in the Terror, an intangible cloud of smoke can indicate that a home and perhaps its occupants also, are burning (XV, p. 335). Fires are not lit to produce warmth, but to evaporate everything of worth that is on the ground: "et tout le bonheur comme tout le malheur de l'homme sont parfois dans cette

chose éparse au vent" (XV, p. 335). However, there is little "malheur" in the pall above Herbe-en-Pail, because fire is the castigation inflicted by the Royalist commander. This smoke rather contains the malevolence required by one man to devastate another's property and family. This act of arson reveals the chaotic nature of the *Ancien Régime*, because Lantenac torches territory which is part of his heritage. He prefers a charred wasteland to an area of fertility. Lantenac's command to burn "la ferme" and "le hameau" (XV, p. 334) demonstrates that he is prepared to destroy the microcosm and the macrocosm by fire. Neither the miniscule nor the significant can escape the flames.

The men who burned Herbe-en-Pail do not appreciate that their lives are equally fragile. Their very strategy in the field ironically betrays their vulnerability. The entire army of *Vendéen* peasants seems to be nebulous and unstable: "et cette armée, à travers les rues de la ville comme à travers les trous d'un crible, se dispersa dans la campagne, avec une rapidité de nuée emportée par l'ouragan" (XV, p. 410). Such a vast number of men are therefore no more consequential than cloud that is quickly absorbed into a storm. There is also the suggestion that "l'ouragan" of civil war has the capacity to eradicate many more lives still, and not only on the Royalist side. Gauvain and his band of twenty men conceal their presence "glissant comme des ombres" (XV, p. 409), and the fluidity of shadows suggests that they could effortlessly be converted into ghosts. Nevertheless, frailty is not respected in the Terror, and the perpetrators of Herbe-en-Pail go on to burn a library in which they have placed three infants.

The inferno evokes a virulent desire to irreparably destroy the solid, to transform it into a volatile gas and then to watch its total dispersal in the wind. This obliteration is practised by the Royalists, but it is

also advocated by the Revolutionaries. A member of the *Convention*, Fayau, "proposait <<l'envoi d'une armée incendiaire>> dans la Vendée" (XV, p. 373). The intention to make France burn as Rome had done centuries earlier thus seems to be universal.

Those governing in Paris have no more durability than the peasant hordes fighting in *la Vendée*. All the ardent, vocal members of the *Convention* and of the different Clubs, the infamous Robespierre and Danton among them, are no more than vanishing clouds, without distinction or direction:

> "tous ces hommes! tas de fumées poussées dans tous les sens" (XV, p. 379).

The adjective "poussées" reveals that during the Terror, the powerful merely deluded themselves that they were so. Hugo belittles the mortality and the achievements of the prominent figures of the Terror, because despite their declamation they nevertheless go to the scaffold.[20] In Les Misérables, Hugo stated that "pour que la Révolution soit...il faut que Danton l'ose" (XI, p. 442). Danton has dared in Quatrevingt-Treize, but the Revolution he courageously instigated is about to strike him down: "au moment où ils condamnèrent à mort Louis XVI, Robespierre avait encore dix-huit mois à vivre, Danton quinze mois" (XV, p. 376).

In Les Misérables, Hugo cites the illustrious and their past glories to invoke revolution, "tenter, braver, persister, persévérer...étonner la catastrophe par le peu de peur qu'elle nous fait" (XI, p. 443). However, in Quatrevingt-Treize, the Revolution destroys its greatest advocates. Great upheaval was positive in Les Misérables, "la révolution, appelez-la Progrès" (XI, p. 286), but in Quatrevingt-Treize it is a rage that is beyond the control of men and it chaotically consumes even its supporters. Emphasis is upon the turbulent nature of revolution and its treatment of men rather than upon its eventual outcome. Fires are started as an

assertion of power, but the arsonists do not realise that they and their leaders are in the grip of a much greater conflagration, the Terror, which will sweep them all away without trace: "tous ces combattants qui sont aujourd'hui des fantômes" (XV, p. 371). In the 1870s, Hugo accentuates the certain dissolution of all the participants in revolution.

Incineration in Quatrevingt-Treize is perhaps the culmination of wilful damage in the later novels, which is also negative metamorphosis. Nature and the elements deliberately destroy and men replicate their violence against the cosmos and against each other. The willingness to desolate that which already exists at times seems to be stronger than the predisposition to create afresh.

Disintegration and Destruction

Nature's demolition is shown to be particularly chaotic, because it cuts down what it has brought forth: "la mer qui les a élevés, les renverse" (XII, p. 537). "L'Atlantique ronge nos côtes" (XII, p. 515) and stable, solid Mother Earth which sustains man seems to be submitting to the oppressive might of the restless winds and waves. However, "l'homme est un rongeur" (XII, p. 537) also, so that man relentlessly erodes like the elements, rather than discrediting their disruption with the fruits of his intellect: "la mer édifie et démolit; et l'homme aide la mer, non à bâtir, mais à détruire" (XII, p. 537). The desire to ravage is more profoundly intrinsic in 'Homo Edax' than in nature.

The island home sheltering the exiled author appears to be crumbling. The nineteenth century has brought Guernsey the prosperity of the steamship, but the island is in physical decline. "Jusque vers 1805, Guernesey a été coupée en deux îles. Un fleuve de mer la traversait" (XII, p. 539). However, the attack by the sea is insignificant compared to that made upon Guernsey by man. The loss to England of territory that was

originally French is defined as a "démolition" (XII, p. 539) by Hugo, but this negative metamorphosis is literal. Guernsey stone, and therefore Guernsey itself, is being heavily quarried: "en quatre ans, à Saint Pierre-Port, sous les fenêtres des habitants de la Falue, une montagne a disparu" (XII, p. 538).

In seventeenth century England, demolishment does not even possess the pretext of being necessary for new constructions. Stuart society is either gratuitously wrecking existing buildings, or doing so to injure the people within them. The desire to destroy is wanton vandalism in L'Homme Qui Rit, but it is perpetrated by the highest échelons of society, even by Queen Anne herself: "elle avait des rages. Elle était casseuse" (XIV, p. 153). These sentences indicate that vandalism is the visualisation of the madness of those who indulge in it. Those who have the most wealth rampage through the capital at night whilst the workers rest and they meticulously impair every part of their property:

> "les membres du Fun Club, tous de la plus haute aristocratie, couraient Londres à l'heure où les bourgeois dorment, arrachaient les gonds des volets, coupaient les tuyaux des pompes, défonçaient les citernes, décrochaient les enseignes...éteignaient les réverbères...cassaient les carreaux des fenêtres, surtout dans les quartiers indigents" (XIV, p. 150).

The young aristocrats, including Dirry-Moir, ensure that other vandals, such as the wind, rain and burglars, can worsen the devastation. Bourgeois have the means to repair their houses, but for those who do not, the attack is even more severe: "sous Jacques II, un jeune lord millionnaire...avait mis le feu la nuit à une chaumière" (XIV, p. 150). The poor seem to be punished for not possessing the bourgeois' ability to continually provide material for the noblemen to destroy.

English vandalism permeates even the remotest regions of the country (XIV, p. 150) and was still being inflicted in Hugo's time, so escaping

from it seems impossible.[38] There is no recourse for compensation or even complaint, because "c'étaient les riches qui faisaient cela aux misérables" (XIV, p. 150). The positive concepts of home and rest have no meaning for the populace in Stuart society. The former is merely an extension of aristocratic property, to be dispensed with as they wish. Poor people are disturbed from their sleep to find themselves in an inferno and the bourgeois are reminded they must be vigilant throughout the night if they wish their houses to remain intact. The people cannot shield themselves from the omnipresent monarchy, which is restrained by no barrier.

A cosy interior is the setting for one of the most disturbing scenes of vandalism in Quatrevingt-Treize. This novel delineates a year of wilful destruction, but perhaps the most telling incident is that in the library, when the children re-enact "le massacre de Saint-Barthélemy". There is some satire in the comment "saint Barthélemy, après avoir été écorché en Arménie, fut écartelé en Bretagne" (XV, p. 440), but the emphasis is upon the gleeful vigour with which the children shred the precious volume. They hurl themselves into this destruction, tearing again and again to ensure that this book is completely disintegrated:

> "ils ramassèrent et déchirèrent, ramassèrent encore et déchirèrent encore...et page à page, émiétté par ces petits doigts acharnés, presque tout l'antique livre s'envola dans le vent" (XV, p. 442).[39]

Georgette observes the dispersion in the wind as "papillons" (XV, p. 442), but the inference is that after his second "extermination" (XV, p. 441) Saint Barthélemy has gone to heaven. In Les Travailleurs de la Mer Hugo noted: "l'enfant, brisant son jouet, a l'air d'en chercher l'âme" (XII, p. 537), but the *petits Fléchards* have not merely broken the book. They have obliterated it, as if to decimate "l'âme" of their toy also. The children display the same determination to erase without trace that the adults in the Terror possess: "rien ne resta de Saint-Barthélemy" (XV, p. 442).

However, there is one vital distinction between them. The children are not aware that they are laying waste to a valuable, edifying text (XV, p. 441), but the adults who have abandoned them there fully appreciate that they have thrown innocence and the future into an inferno. The children's distraction reveals that "l'appétit de la destruction existe" (XV, p. 441) in the human animal which satisfies itself with paper when it is young, but demands the blood of its counterparts when it is fully grown. The advancement of adults is obstructed because they can remain slaves to their base instinct.

Violation

Metamorphosis prescribed by man has degenerated since Les Travailleurs de la Mer. In the first of the later novels, men wear down natural, inanimate stone in order to make use of it in their cities, but in L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize men impose metamorphosis upon other living beings, his defenceless fellows included. In Hugo's last two novels, the human conscience seems to have been swept away in the universal tide of destruction, because men are as unrestrained as the ferocious elements.

Nature is made to bow to the will of arrogant man in L'Homme Qui Rit. The aristocrat Hugh Middleton dared to alter the landscape: "cette rivière était tranquille dans le comté de Hartford, à soixante milles de Londres; le chevalier Middleton vint et la prit" (XIV, p. 35). That this waterway is an abomination is indicated by its name: "la rivière Serpentine" (XIV, p. 35). Temporal power thus asserts itself over the eternal and the miniscule subjugates the unbounded. The nobility's crimes against nature resemble those of the king against the people: "que myrmidon est grand! il est sur mon dos" (XIV, p. 155).

The aristocracy in L'Homme Qui Rit presume to recreate what God has already created and their impudence extends to dumb beasts and human

beings.[40] Theirs is the purpose of chaos, rendering the feeble warlike and the superior abject. Dirry-Moir lacerates a cockerel: "il lui grattait les pattes avec un canif, lui aiguisait les ongles, lui emboîtait dans le maître ergot un éperon d'acier aigu et tranchant" (XIV, p. 151). He carves the creature as if it were an insensible block of wood, and transforms the fowl into a synthetic bird of prey: "voilà comment d'un coq on fait un aigle" (XIV, p. 151). Dirry-Moir sculpts this bird specifically in order that he will tear another of his kind apart with his artificially imposed barbs, so this altered cockerel will inflict the suffering he himself has endured. To emphasise the humiliation of the bird and his utter disdain for nature, Dirry-Moir "lui crachait sur la tête, lui crachait sur le cou, l'oignait de salive comme on frottait d'huile les athlètes" (XIV, p. 151). After being made to assume the guise of another of its genus, the cockerel is then expected to perform like a human athlete. There is apparently no limit to the amount of barriers which the transmogrified must cross. The cockerel is removed from his familiar surroundings of the farmyard where he has served man to an alien arena of mortal combat where he is utterly denigrated by man.

A cockerel is not needed to wake the Court because the function is fulfilled by a man. The Stuarts pay William Sampson Coq to imitate the bird's chorus for them, but their predecessors were not so generous. Operations were performed on young boys to provide an authentic crowing sound: "cet homme, promu coq, avait subi pour cela en son enfance une opération dans le pharynx" (XIV, p. 46). Complaints, if any arose from this man's mouth, would be unintelligible: he has been silenced as surely as if he had had his tongue removed. The unfortunate not only lost his voice irretrievably, but was also made to suffer the humiliation of slobbering endlessly as a result. "Sous Charles II, une salivation

inhérente à l'opération ayant dégoûté la duchesse de Portsmouth" (XIV, pp. 46-47), this physical metamorphosis ceased to be inflicted. The Court cockerel is allowed no sleep, "ce veilleur, debout pendant qu'on dormait' (XIV, p. 46), since he must mark the passing of time with his crowing: "répété autant de fois qu'il le fallait pour suppléer à une cloche" (XIV, p. 46). He is constantly forced to testify to his degradation, and the Court prefers this inhuman noise they have had manufactured to the harmony of a bell. The deeper the humiliation and the more depraved the atrocity, the more replete is the exultation of the English aristocracy.

No breathing creature is allowed the right to its own integrity. Men are demoted to beasts, who become steel fighting machines. As the nobility smashed houses, their amateur surgeon's knives are ever willing to rend any flesh and refashion it as they please.

Violation continues in Quatrevingt-Treize. The unutterably precious is reduced to its basest significance and is destroyed. In Les Misérables, Hugo accentuates the value of the earth and of education, but in Quatrevingt-Treize, both are deemed worthless. Lantenac's transformation of fertile pasture into dry chaff is suggested in the name of the village he torches, "Herbe-en-Pail". The inhabitants of this village are massacred without hesitation.

The burning of the library demonstrates that there is no regard for education in the Terror: "pour un assiégeant qui utilise l'incendie, brûler Homère ou brûler une botte de foin, pourvu que cela brûle, c'est la même chose" (XV, p. 424). Obliteration, not advancement, is of pre-eminent importance and this is the lesson which France and Germany have taught each other (XV, p. 424). Education is anti-education and such futile retribution has resulted in immeasurable waste. The houses damaged by the aristocrats in L'Homme Qui Rit could be restored, but the vandalism

delineated in Hugo's final novel is irreparable. The burning of books is an insult to the past and a crime against the future, eradicating the history from which valuable insights could be gained. The fire in the library in *La Tourgue* was no doubt inspired by that which was started in Paris during the disturbances of the Commune:

> "certes le décret des ôtages, puis l'incendie de Paris (en particulier de la bibliothèque du Louvre) horrifièrent d'abord Hugo plus vivement que les scènes lointaines de la Terreur".[41]

Nevertheless, "les livres et la paille sont du combustible" (XV, p. 424) is a profoundly negative statement for a writer to make. He envisages his own effacement. The lack of anxiety about the burning of *La Tourgue* betrays the considerable pessimism of Hugo.

Lantenac, the personification of the *Ancien Régime*, refuses to be dissuaded from brutality, despite the examples of the excesses of history. On landing in France, he alights upon a dune dedicated to Thomas à Becket (XV, p. 323). He remains indifferent to the martyr, and betrays Tellmarch by pillaging and committing murder and kidnap. Lantenac was not alone in wishing to ignore the sufferings of the martyr, because the tribute to him was not maintained after the dune was flattened (XV, p. 323). If any good is to arise from the slaying of the innocent, it must be in the future prevention of martyrdom. In the Terror, however, a society in which a man prizes his livestock more highly than his children (XV, p. 394), the innocent seem to have been slain in order to provide the symbol of martyrdom: "quelques-uns portaient en sautoir une croix faite de deux os de mort" (XV, p. 394). The Crucifixion is vilified because this travesty elevates the means of execution above its victim. Most violations are imposed upon the living, but the extreme irreverence of tampering with a human being's remains to supply a protective talisman indicates the depravity of this society. Their cross is a hollow testament of death, not

a promise of resurrection. Their making of such an object indicates that they do not deserve the life to which they desire to adhere, since they have no respect for it. Human life is repeatedly violated whilst death is revered. Futile destruction, not beneficent creation, is the aim that is constantly sought. Nothing is sacrosanct: man often will change anything for the worse.

Conclusion

The potential to achieve the positive unquestionably remains in the later novels, because the *Durande* is won, love is inextinguishable and the children are saved. Even in Quatrevingt-Treize, Hugo's vision of the battle of forces in society still allows for change, even if progress is far into the distance. The physical instability delineated in the novels is also disturbing, but without such changeableness beneficent metamorphosis could not occur. However, Hugo does not accentuate man's positive achievements in these works. The emphasis is upon the difficulty of the struggle, the battles lost and the changes for the worse.

The final two novels are also not as optimistic as la Mer. In L'Homme Qui Rit, metamorphosis brings interminable suffering and in Quatrevingt-Treize, negative change is inflicted with facile indifference, because human life is without significance. Gilliatt had to conquer the mighty obstacles of the elements to realise a positive change, but in L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize the precious is destroyed because the ethical barriers which would prevent interference are not respected.

Negative, imposed metamorphosis reveals the degree of human helplessness in the cosmos. There is no protection that man can build which will be invincible against the elements or a tyrannical régime: the home is non-existent in the later novels. The evil exterior will always

force its way into the comforting interior. Moreover, a human being is not even safe within his skin in L'Homme Qui Rit; it is merely another barrier to be penetrated. There is also little distinction between the ravaging committed by the elements and that perpetrated by man, since both wilfully destroy:

> "les éléments savent ce qu'ils font et où ils vont. Aucune force n'est aveugle" (XII, p. 639).

In the earlier novels, negatives were succeeded by positives, but in the later novels, this movement tends to be reversed. The negativity of metamorphosis adds to the pessimistic effect of the later novels, which is contrary to the most well-known of Hugo's works, in particular Les Misérables. In Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel, Victor Brombert perceives that "evil itself is part of creation" (p. 159), but in the later novels and especially in L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize, the desire to create evil from good is powerful and almost universal. Moreover, this strong propensity towards violation and destruction does correspond to the pessimistic, Sadeian view of man.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. The worlds delineated within Hugo's later novels are perhaps the most unsettled of the French Romantic movement. L'Education Sentimentale and L'Homme Qui Rit were published in the same year, 1869, but their openings are utterly dissimilar. Flaubert is exact about time and location, but at the beginning of Hugo's novel all is indefinite and amorphous. Hugo's details are intended to confuse his reader and his narrative concerns the very problem of knowing. Flaubert refers to a time that certainly existed, but Hugo's narrative is much more allegorical.

2. The *mise en abîme* of alchemy in Les Travailleurs de la Mer and L'Homme Qui Rit accentuates the theme of metamorphosis. Alchemy manifested Frollo's thirst for knowledge and his pursuit of the ideal, but it has more sinister significances in the later novels. In *la Jacressarde* there is an alchemist who dismantles the building to fuel his cauldron. With complete dispassion, he burns his home and the shelter of his fellow residents to conduct his experiments: "il brûlait la maison" (XII, p. 624). In Les Travailleurs de la Mer, alchemy thus entails deprivation and destruction, and its practitioner is a supreme egotist who has no concern for the human beings surrounding him. This "<<chimiste>>" (XII, p. 624), demonstrates negative metamorphosis which causes ruination but produces no benefit. The successor to this hazardous scientist is found in Ursus, who, like the alchemist, practises "transmutation" (XIV, p. 35). The chemistry in which Ursus indulges is humorous, because his stove combines an experiment vat and also a cooking pot. Scientific endeavours to produce metamorphosis are satirised and are subjugated beneath the more fundamental human need to eat. The maintenance of human life with warmth and food are thus promoted above the intellectual quest to physically change the elements.

3. Lectures du Dix-Neuvième Siècle, Union Générale d'Editions, Paris, 1976, Volume I, p. 260. In addition, see C.W. Thompson's article, 'Du rire romantique à l'espace éclaté: sur L'Homme Qui Rit et Le Coeur du Pitre de Rimbaud', RHLF, 1991, no: 2, pp. 214-228. On p. 215, our attention is drawn to Hugo's assertion that "le flot [...] ne se noue que pour se dénouer" (XIV, p. 86).

4. The *Durande* testifies to the benefits resulting from advances in marine engineering. However, Hugo counteracts this positive metamorphosis with the murderous American invention of the revolver. 'Le Revolver' is the title of the fifth book of Les Travailleurs de la Mer, beginning and ending at

Gilliatt's discovery that something is amiss at *Les Bravées*, so that the entire section copies the rotating action of the eponymous firearm. This invention is disquieting because it kills efficiently and effortlessly. It is a product of "l'étranger", the new Continent of America. The section 'Le Revolver' reflects the danger of the alien, with the smugglers muttering in an unknown tongue and the iniquity and squalor of *la Jacressarde* on the mainland of France. The revolver is portrayed as a frightening weapon and establishes its owner as a merciless individual. Clubin could have used the revolver on Rantaine to prevent the murder of the coastguard, but it was a sufficient deterrent to persuade Rantaine to relinquish Lethierry's money. The revolver is thus unequivocally an evil instrument which lends itself only to the perpetration of evil. Hugo demonstrates that progressive technology which is brought with the onslaught of time is not automatically for the good. The past has devastated, but the future is not the guaranteed ideal for civilisation.

5. Valjean delivers himself into the hands of the law to prevent a miscarriage of justice and the false conviction of le père Champmathieu (XI, p. 237) and tries to dissuade Montparnasse from a life of crime (XI, pp. 658 -660).

6. In his 'cabinet de travail' on the first floor of Hauteville-House, Hugo placed three armchairs which were respectively inscribed 'Filius', 'Amatus amat', 'Pater' (Jean Delalande, Victor Hugo à Hauteville House, Editions Albin Michel, Paris, 1947, p. 95). This series of inscriptions manifests Hugo's conviction that the son who is loved will in return love others and become a good father himself. This formula for the realisation of positive metamorphosis is reminiscent of Jean Valjean and his conversion and is the reverse to the vengeful Rabelaisian transformation, *mangeur/mangé*.

Hugo's devotion to children is beyond doubt. During his exile from 1862 onwards, Hugo held a weekly 'repas des enfants pauvres' at Hauteville-House and provided a festive occasion for them at Christmas. His attachment to his own grandchildren was absolute. The manuscript of Quatrevingt-Treize (N.a.f. 24750) begins "je commence aujourd'hui à écrire Quatrevingt-Treize. J'ai dans mon cristal-room, sous mes yeux, le portrait de Charles et les deux portraits de Georges et de Jeanne". The trio of infants in Quatrevingt-Treize, Georgette, René-Jean and Gros-Alain are undoubtedly inspired by Charles' three children. His first-born, Georges I, died at the age of 12 months, in April 1868, during the composition of L'Homme Qui Rit.

7. Victor Brombert calls *Chaos vaincu* a "sacramental celebration" (Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1984, p. 196).

8. The fusion of *genres* echoes that which Hugo incorporated in L'Homme Qui Rit: "ce livre est un drame...Ce livre est aussi une histoire" (XIV, pp. 388-389). *Chaos vaincu* is the *mise en abŷme* of the novel.

9. The alien tongue spoken by Gwynplaine and Dea and not understood by the audience is a metaphor for the latter's complete misinterpretation of the play. The language enounced in *Chaos vaincu* is only comprehended by those members of the audience whose livelihood is a combat with the forces of chaos: "alors la vision...chantait ces vers, d'une pureté espagnole suffisante pour les matelots anglais qui écoutaient" (XIV, p. 199).

10. On board the *Vograat*, Dea's cry "lumière!" (XIV, p. 383) is also the sad indication that the blind girl is leaving her mortal body.

11. The play does to some extent remain in the memory of the audience because it is so ideal: "cette populace... acceptait avec une sympathie confuse et profonde, et même avec un certain respect attendri" (XIV, p. 201). However, they nevertheless deride *Chaos vaincu* with deafening laughter.

12. Hugo declares: "la chose en ce monde qui peut le plus être hideuse, c'est la joie" (XIV, p. 273).

13. Guy Rosa, 'Critique et autocritique', L'Homme Qui Rit ou la Parole-Monstre de Victor Hugo, SEDES, Paris, 1985, p. 17.

14. The Marquis of Queensberry rules were introduced in 1867.

15. This is a motivation for Cimourdain's suicide. The death of his protégé and at his own Revolutionary hands, rendered his own life meaningless.

16. *p. v.*

17. *p. v.*

18. Oeuvres Complètes de Victor Hugo, Ollendorff, Tome 9, p. 475.

19. *Chaos vaincu*: Quelques Remarques sur l'Oeuvre Littéraire de Victor Hugo, Belles Lettres, Paris, 1976, pp. 112-113.

20. *op. cit.*, p. 243.

21. "It is also of interest to compare the birth pangs of the Casquets with those of Le Hanois. In the case of the former, shipowners approached the owner of the rocks in 1722, a year in the 'backward' eighteenth century; the King granted the patent with the blessing of Trinity House in 1723 and the first light appeared in October 1724! In the case of the Hanois, a hazard at least as great, and arguably even greater, a light was first mooted by both private individuals and the Lieutenant Governor in 1816, a year in the enlightened nineteenth century but it took 43 years for Trinity House to agree to build a lighthouse on the reef and December 1862 had been reached before the first light shone forth!" (Eric W. Sharp, Lighthouses of the Channel Islands, Toucan Press, Guernsey, 1986, p. 6).

22. This device has already been appreciated by Guy Rosa in his article 'Critique et autocritique', L'Homme Qui Rit ou la Parole-Monstre de Victor Hugo, SEDES, Paris, 1985, pp. 10-11: "mise en accusation de la société française du second Empire bien plus que de l'aristocratie anglaise du dix-septième siècle".

23. This situation is the antithesis to that in the previous novel, in which Hugo asserted the positive metamorphosis: "jadis loup, aujourd'hui homme" (XII, p. 540). This regression from the human to the bestial in L'Homme Qui Rit suggests the reversal in Hugo's attitude, from optimism to pessimism. Gilbert Durand additionally points out: "c'est le loup, qui, pour l'imagination occidentale, est l'animal féroce par excellence" (Les Structures Anthropolgiques de l'Imaginaire, Collection Etudes Supérieures, Bordas, Paris, 1969, p. 91).

24. The Massin edition of Hugo's complete works indicates that Hugo refers to the events of May, 1871 (XV, p. 393).

25. XIV, p. 396.

26. "Non, d'où sort le matin sortira l'avenir...
L'aube est une parole éternelle donnée...
Et je crie: Espérez! à quiconque aime et pense;"
(L'Année Terrible, Juillet, XV, p. 208).

27. 'Du rire romantique à l'espace éclaté: sur L'Homme Qui Rit et Le Coeur du Pitre de Rimbaud', RHLF, 1991, no: 2, p. 222.

28. The sentence which precedes this illustrates many of the different appearances which rocks have and concludes with: "puis c'est une figure assise qui lit dans un livre" (XII, p. 519). Hugo is surely making a self-reference here: he was often photographed reading among the rocks by the sea. Is Hugo imagining his own disappearance?

29. La Nouvelle Justine, Oeuvres Complètes du Marquis de Sade, Tome Septième, Au Cercle du Livre Précieux, Paris, MDCCCCLXVI, p. 300.

30. Slow torture and psychological torture are always inflicted by the most depraved of executioners in de Sade, such as Saint-Fond in L'Histoire de Juliette. Oeuvres Complètes du Marquis de Sade, Tome Huitième, Au Cercle du Livre Précieux, Paris, MDCCCCLXVI, p. 320.

31. "Il faut rapprocher de cette valorisation négative du mouvement brusque, le thème du Mal chez Victor Hugo que Baudouin fort justement appelle le 'Zwang'" (Les Structures Anthropolgiques de l'Imaginaire. Collection Etudes Supérieures, Bordas, Paris, 1969, p. 78.

32. Victor Brombert calls the wapentake a "symbol of oppression and death" (Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel. Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1984, p. 174).

33. Joanna Richardson, Victor Hugo, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1976, p. 205.

34. As Gérald Schaeffer points out in note 144 to the Garnier Flammarion edition, (Volume II), this alienation from the self prefigures Rimbaud's "le je est un autre" (p. 372).

35. This sight is particularly distressing because Gilbert Durand reveals that "l'arbre signifie le devenir" (Les Structures Anthropolgiques de l'Imaginaire. Collection Etudes Supérieures, Bordas, Paris, 1969, p. 392).

36. "Les yeux étaient deux trous, et du ventre effondré,
Les intestins pesants lui coulaient sur les cuisses,
Et ses bourreaux, gorgés de hideuses délices,
L'avaient à coups de bec absolument châtré".
Hugo's hanged man strongly resembles that of Baudelaire, and he is executed again by carrion birds. Baudelaire's narrator also exclaims "ridicule pendu, tes douleurs sont les miennes!" and Gwynplaine later makes a similar self-identification. The parallel with Baudelaire's poem has been recognised (see note 90, Volume I, Garnier edition), but did this work also inspire Hugo to draw an allusion between the corpse on the gallows and his hero Gwynplaine?

37. "leaders of the Revolution are scattered like foam, dashed to pieces" (Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel. Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1984, p. 221).

38. See footnote 3, XII, p. 150.

39. Brombert observes that this episode "implies a

disappearance, as well as a dissemination" (Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1984, p. 217).

40. Destruction extends even to the human body and was established as an art form by Doctor Conquest whose name indicates that he is the oppressor of mortal flesh. Gwynplaine's countenance is only one of the grotesque designs of this scholar. His Latin texts echo the Catholic litany. Disfiguring children acquires the sacredness of a religious service, but this is a black rite.

41. Quatrevingt-Treize, Editions Folio Gallimard, Préface d'Yves Gohin, Paris, 1979, p. 25.

Chapter Three - Cosmic Injustice

In this chapter, I am going to consider the question of justice. Such an examination is essential to a study of the representation of evil, because if justice is eventually seen to be done, then the forces of good can be said to be demonstrating their superiority. What this chapter will be obliged to show, however, is the superior might of evil in Hugo's later novels. Justice is also highly relevant to the subject of pessimism, because hope is severely diminished in a universe in which the malevolent prosper without punishment.

However, this chapter is not going to concern itself with Hugo's representation of the jurisdiction exercised by society. His earliest works are an outcry against man-made systems of justice. The executors of law in Notre-Dame de Paris and Le Dernier Jour d'Un Condamné maim and kill; on the pretext of administering justice they commit brutal acts with complete immunity, often against the innocent.

By the 1860s, Hugo's conviction as to the total inability of men to deliver true justice had become even more profound. Whereas in Les Misérables the criminals of *Patron-Minette* were imprisoned for their crimes, in Les Travailleurs de la Mer society fails to castigate Rantaine or Clubin. The tortures that were inflicted on Esméralda seem to be indiscriminately imposed in L'Homme Qui Rit, even upon children. Moreover, while the executors of punishment in the earlier novels were incompetent and fundamentally indifferent to human life, their successors derive Sadeian relish from causing pain and expending life. Undoubtedly in the later novels society has become very bleak, and the law has become a means of gratification for the depraved.

The ageing Hugo can thus hardly be said to have believed that the legal systems were being improved and the later novels increasingly stress the continuing absence of social justice.[1] In them, fair treatment,

unlike progress, is not even a distant aspiration.

However, I do not wish to deliberate here upon the justice imposed by man-made institutions because in this respect there is no more than a persistence and an intensification of the negative traits portrayed in the earlier novels. More interesting is what happens to the sort of justice that narratives themselves could be said to administer, for by allowing the success of benevolent characters and ensuring the punishment of wicked ones, a novel can by implication redress the misdeeds of a legal system and can suggest a bent for justice in the cosmos. And in this respect, the destinies of individual characters are totally different in the earlier and later novels. In the earlier novels, the fate of the villain is harsh. An untimely, unnatural death meets Han, Frollo and Javert, while their counterparts in the later novels rise relentlessly. Moreover, as I pointed out in my first chapter, in the earlier novels, malevolent energies evaporate upon the death of their perpetrators, while in the later ones, the malign influence of Clubin and the *comprachicos* persists after their expiry, even though they expiate their crimes with their lives. An increased awareness in the older Hugo of the strength of evil and of the difficulty of eradicating it is clearly suggested.

In a consideration of cosmic justice, a comparison between Les Misérables and the later novels is especially telling. The selfless Jean Valjean enjoys the vicarious satisfaction of witnessing Cosette's happiness and his death is an apotheosis. Much more minimal is the personal achievement of the later heroes; their deaths are suicides. Gwynplaine's conviction that he will be joining Dea in heaven appears a delusion, because Hugo emphasises the profound obscurity of the sky: "le ciel était absolument noir, il n'y avait plus d'étoiles, mais évidemment il en voyait une" (XIV, p. 384). Valjean attains complete contentment in the eternal

paradise, but this ultimate consolation is denied his successors. There is no transcendance for the benevolent in the later novels and the innocent are continually brutalised whilst the guilty frequently escape castigation.

After Les Misérables, reward for benignity is negligible, whereas the power of the iniquitous increases. In the domain of cosmic justice, the universal propensity towards fairness is unequivocally more vigorous in the earlier novels and can be observed at its strongest in Les Misérables.[2] Afterwards, the scales of cosmic justice tip and favour the perpetrators of evil.

This question of the brutal treatment of the innocent and the complete lack of punishment for the villainous is highly relevant to the Marquis de Sade, since he too focused on the question of criminality and retribution.[3] Sade incessantly displays the torture of the defenceless and the triumph of the wicked in his works. Like Roland in La Nouvelle Justine, the sea in Les Travailleurs de la Mer is a cruel "geôlière" (XII, p. 708) and she treats Gilliatt harshly. In L'Homme Qui Rit, the merciless judges, Jeffrys and Kirke, relish the destruction of men, like their depraved counterpart Saint-Fond in L'Histoire de Juliette. Quatrevingt-Treize portrays numerous acts of violence that are inflicted upon the innocent and this final intensification of cosmic evil surely occurred because of Hugo's experience of the Commune, which André Maurois relates in Olympio:

> "Flourens tué, Chaudey fusillé par la Commune, Lockroy arrêté par Versailles...Louise Michel, la Vierge Rouge, dont Hugo admirait 'la pitié formidable' en danger de mort. La Commune avait tué 64 otages, l'Assemblée fusillait 6000 prisonniers. Cent pour un. 'Qu'avez-vous fait? Fusillades sommaires, tueries sans jugements, cours martiales de hasard...'(Histoire de Depuis l'Exil, Actes et Paroles III)".[4]

Maurois reminds us that the Commune was a period of severe reprisals, when countless people were made to pay with their lives for the crimes of the

few. French society at that time was dominated by revenge, not by justice. Quatrevingt-Treize depicts many "fusillades sommaires" and "tueries sans jugements", so that in his final novel, Hugo had clearly decided to pay testament to the viciousness that his fellow countrymen had just shown to one another.

The Punishment of the Guilty

Although I am persuaded that the villains of the later novels are not dealt with as severely as their predecessors, I do not pretend that all fiends in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize triumph with impunity. Indeed, many wrongdoers are castigated, and even oppressed by the very ill which they imposed on their victims, as the dynamic of *lex talionis* dictates and as Les Contemplations propounds:

> "Les êtres de fureur, de sang, de trahison,
> Avec leurs actions bâtissent leur prison" (IX, p. 377).

However, as I will shortly demonstrate, in the later novels, *lex talionis* is often of such severity that it appears to resemble injustice rather than justice.

Of course, one cannot deny that *lex talionis* ensures that some justice is still seen to be done in the later novels, and that in them, some miscreants are "puni par où l'on a péché", to employ Baudouin's interpretation of *lex talionis* in Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo.[5] Rantaine deprived Lethierry of half of his fortune (XII, p. 581), only to be subsequently denied his own by Clubin on the cliffs, despite his comic protest "mais c'est un vol!" (XII, p. 630), which stresses the lack of honour among the thieves. For his part, Clubin is then also made to acknowledge human frailty. On the *Douvres* rocks, he congratulates himself that he has shown greater acumen than Rantaine and interprets his lone presence as an affirmation of his superiority over the rest of the human

race, "l'absence des hommes assurait son triomphe", though "il eût joui d'être effroyable devant témoin" (XII, p. 650). However, as the mist disperses, Clubin is forced to become the spectator, not of his individual triumph, but of his self-inflicted ruin. The mist which Captain Gertrais-Gaboureau had warned Clubin "c'est un sournois, le brouillard" (XII, p. 633) finally lifts to reveal "l'épouvantable écueil isolé" (XII, p. 651) and informs Clubin that his powers of deceit were vastly inferior to those of the elements. Here, the division between topographical exterior and psychological interior becomes almost invisible. The fog that represents cosmic treachery had lain concealed in "le coupe-gorge de l'océan" (XII, p. 651) and the barren rocks suggest that it is his dishonesty which has caused Clubin to isolate himself from his fellow men. "Dissimuler est une violence subie" (XII, p. 649) and Clubin had endured thirty years of it (XII, p. 648), but he who has tortured himself with relentlessly deceiving others is made to recognise that he was his own most gullible dupe: "il était l'architecte laborieux de sa catastrophe" (XII, p. 652). After sacrificing the "Devil-boat" (XII, p. 584), which had only the appearance of diabolism, it is apt retribution against Clubin, the "démon, heureux" (XII, p. 648), that he is destroyed by the "Devil-fish" (XII, p. 741).

After witnessing the entirety of self-defeat in the seascape of the *Douvres*, Clubin is obliged to grapple with his own hideous identity, because "la pieuvre, c'est l'hypocrite" (XII, p. 741). Clubin has distinguished himself not by his greater intellect, but by his thorough inhumanity, and he will be absorbed by a figuration of the monstrosity of his soul:

> "cette bête s'applique sur sa proie, la recouvre, et la noue de ses longues bandes. En dessous elle est jaunâtre, en dessus elle est terreuse" (XII, p. 740).

So he who was supremely arrogant is finally degraded and Hugo emphasises

that Clubin's long, silent sufferings were all in vain. "Boire perpétuellement son imposture" was "une nausée" to Clubin (XII, p. 649), and his compensation is that of "être bu vivant" (XII, p. 742) by a flaccid monster. Moreover, Clubin had desired an audience to marvel at his triumph, but he is denied any opportunity to parade his final sacrifice. The *lex talionis* awarded to Clubin is a horrifying experience of self-discovery which is made all the more terrible because he bears it alone. Hugo shows that Clubin the hypocrite did not succeed in concealing himself but in entombing himself.

Like Clubin, the *comprachicos* are also punished by a *lex talionis* that is imposed upon them by the elements. When the *Matutina* is battered by the wintry seas, the snowstorm inflicts the same damage upon the *comprachicos* as they had perpetrated against infants: "plusieurs avaient le visage déchiré par des éclats de bois" (XIV, p. 100). "Déchiré" and "éclats" evoke the peremptory violence of the lacerations suffered, but such a lashing is fitting retribution for a criminal fraternity which made "des incisions par le fer" (XIV, p. 48) on the faces of the children they kidnapped. This assault by the storm appears to be even more condign upon the discovery that the *comprachicos* had cut away most of the face of the boy whom they had abandoned on the shore: "*bucca fissa usque ad aures, genzivis denudatis, nasoque murdridato*" (XIV, p. 128). A victim of the *comprachicos* believes that "on l'avait guéri" (XIV, p. 48) and this function of perverse redemption is fulfilled by the wind during the snowstorm: "le vent brutalisait ceux qu'il sauvait" (XIV, p. 100). At the mercy of the rocks and of the cosmic frenzy swirling around their antiquated vessel, (XIV, p. 54), the *comprachicos* are made to feel as defenceless as the children they have mutilated.

It is also significant that their faces are not ripped by the

"gr@lons, gros et durs" (XIV, p. 100) but by the fabric of the very ship they hoped would transport them to safety. The *comprachicos* benefitted financially from their use of metal instruments, but the timber upon which they now depend maims them. The *comprachicos* pride themselves on their surgical adroitness (XIV, p. 45), but their faces are torn carelessly during the storm. The snowstorm not only acquaints the *comprachicos* with the vulnerability of the children they disfigured, but it also makes them aware that whatever power they formerly arrogated to themselves, they are insignificant and worthless before the might of the elements.

So *lex talionis* inflicts the most poetic of justices upon the defrauders of Les Travailleurs de la Mer and the amateur surgeons of L'Homme Qui Rit. Rantaine, Clubin and the *comprachicos* are ambitious, indifferent and self-deluding, but *lex talionis* familiarises them not with their aspired or assumed personalities but with the true vileness of their characters. *Lex talionis* forces malefactors to acquire a gruesome self-knowledge, which is swiftly followed in the cases of Clubin and the *comprachicos* by the additional recognition that they will not be able to atone for their sins in this life. Once acquainted with their injuriousness, they cannot escape from it. A penalty awarded by a legal system attacks the physical liberty of a criminal, but *lex talionis* is a direct assault upon his psychological freedom also. Rantaine, Clubin and the *comprachicos* are unremitting villains who suffer the debasement of being instantly parted from the malevolent power that they have presumed to wield. Rantaine, Clubin and the *comprachicos* endure a *volte-face* of their own making. *Lex talionis* is a *coup de théâtre* within the novels but it also suggests the beginning of eternal punishment for those it attacks; Rantaine flees far from Europe and Clubin and the *comprachicos* are sentenced to ultimate banishment. Justice dispensed by a legal system

involves the removal of the criminal from the community, but those who have behaved inhumanly within the societies of Les Travailleurs de la Mer and L'Homme Qui Rit are expelled definitively from them.

In Quatrevingt-Treize the murderous are themselves murdered and the futility of practising evil seems to be forcefully demonstrated in this final novel. Hugo analyses keenly their role in perpetuating the cycle of human violence. It is the character of l'Imânus which most vividly demonstrates this. L'Imânus is an unholy trinity of hatred and ferocity. He has two other gruesome aliases, "Gouge-le-Bruant" and "*Brise-bleu*", the latter evoking "ses carnages de patriotes" (XV, p. 405). However, it is the name from which 'immanity' reverberates that has persisted through the ages: "l'Imânus est mêlé aux superstitions locales" (XV, p. 405). This Royalist butcher seems to be a devil or a monster in the guise of a man, because he was capable of such extreme inhumanity to his fellow men: "il avait sur sa face, la lueur hideuse, et presque surnaturelle, d'une âme à laquelle ne ressemblait aucune autre âme humaine" (XV, p. 405).

L'Imânus has covered his body with tattoos, and these "croix-de-par-Dieu" and "fleurs-de-lys" (XV, p. 405) seem to be an attempt to completely erase the flesh that is the very indication of humanity. These tattoos recall the little boy in L'Homme Qui Rit who was branded with a fleur-de-lys (XIV, p. 49). The depravity of l'Imânus is emphasised, because he has chosen to engrave these symbols upon his own skin. It is ironic that l'Imânus has concealed his flesh with "croix-de-par-Dieu" because it is the Devil's work that he performs: "il était infernalement brave dans le combat, ensuite atroce" (XV, p. 405). This sentence manifests that although l'Imânus is the embodiment of royalism, his true devotion is not to the king but to the oppression of his fellow men. Battle does not satiate his malevolent energies; its aftermath does not bring peace but an

intensification in his savagery.

L'Imânus is the perpetrator of some of the most vicious deeds related in Quatrevingt-Treize. It is he who constructs the inferno in *la Tourgue* and nestles the infants inside it. He ensures that they have no escape from the combustible material surrounding them:

> "il répandit sur le plancher...une mare de goudron où il immergea le bout de la mèche soufrée; puis il fit placer, dans la salle de la bibliothèque, entre le rez-de-chaussée où était le goudron et le grenier où était la paille, les trois berceaux où étaient René-Jean, Gros-Alain et Georgette" (XV, pp. 433-434).

The "mare de goudron" is reminiscent of the "mare de sang" in Herbe-en-Pail that l'Imânus was also involved in spilling. At the height of the battle for *la Tourgue*, l'Imânus relishes inflicting the most grisly of wounds, and from the closest of proximities:

> "l'Imânus aperçut à un de ces trous une de ces prunelles qui regardaient. Il ajusta brusquement à ce trou le canon d'un de ses pistolets et pressa la détente. Le coup parti, et l'Imânus, joyeux, entendit un cri horrible. La balle avait crevé l'oeil et traversé la tête, et le soldat qui regardait venait de tomber dans l'escalier à la renverse" (XV, p. 467).

His destruction of vision suggests that l'Imânus is averse to progress. He is so perverse that his own injuries are acceptable to him: "le ventre était fendu de part en part. L'Imânus ne tomba pas. Il grinça des dents, et dit:- C'est bon!" (XV, p. 467). L'Imânus is a portrait of extreme barbarism and it is apt that he who intended a protracted death for others, even children, should endure an agonising end. L'Imânus adheres to annihilation to the last. Being fatally wounded does not remove his desire to destroy his republican enemies. He asserts that his final act is one of vengeance: "je venge, sur leurs petits, notre petit à nous, le roi qui est au Temple" (XV, p. 468). His words reveal, however, that there is no difference between the victims of the republicans and those of the royalists. They are all children and one murder does not justify another

or replace the extinguished life. In his final deeds and words, l'Imânus merely accentuates the futility of the life that he has led.[6]

L'Imânus was a medium for furious energies and reasoned only "comme les serpents rampent; en spirale" (XV, p. 405). The spiral is suggestive of the Tower of Babel, which the besieged *la Tourgue* resembles: "des mourants se tordaient sur les marches; le tournant de la spirale ne laissait voir que trois ou quatre degrès" (XV, p. 467). "Ses intestins qui sortaient" (XV, p. 467) evoke the diabolical nature of l'Imânus because they suggest the serpents that are the embodiment of Satan. The death scene of l'Imânus is thus like the visualisation of his own chaotic mind and reinforces the certain obliteration that awaits those who conspire to do evil. The murderous psyche not only contains the plans to maim and kill others but also betrays an unavowed intent to turn against itself and eradicate the murderer.

However, throughout the novel, l'Imânus is not implementing his own murderous will, but that of Lantenac. "Le marquis de Lantenac avait confiance en sa cruauté" (XV, p. 406) and he employs l'Imânus as the instrument that immediately exercises his pitiless will. Moreover, l'Imânus is not a gratuitous assassin like his predecessors Rantaine, Clubin and the *comprachicos*. He inflicts the heavy loss that he himself was forced to bear and seeks to eradicate those who annihilated his:

> "hommes qui m'écoutez, je suis Gouge-le-Bruant...
> surnommé aussi l'Imânus, parce que j'en tuerai
> encore plus que je n'en ai tué...vous avez fait
> guillotiner à Laval mon père et ma mère et ma soeur
> Jacqueline, âgée de dix-huit ans. Voilà ce que je
> suis" (XV, p. 427).[7]

L'Imânus was not therefore born malevolent. He is a fiend because he was a victim and his insatiable desire for bloodshed is a measure of the entirety that was taken from him.

Justice had not intervened to redress the wrong suffered by l'Imânus.

The massacre of his kin has resulted in his negative transformation and he consequently expends such brutal energies as have blighted his own existence, so that it is wickedness which is ascendant. Hugo demonstrates that to murder someone is to provide their relatives with the most sanguinary *raison d'être*. The slaughter of his family has dehumanised l'Imânus. He is "Brise-bleu", the wrathful, inexorable dynamic of vengeance: "voilà ce que je suis". To once perpetrate violence is to guarantee its ceaselessness. By committing such atrocities as those imposed upon his family, l'Imânus entangles himself in the incessant mechanism of reciprocal violence and his own obliteration is inevitable. Hugo emphasises that there is nothing positive to be gained from responding to destructiveness with further injury, and yet it is the energy to harm that rules and abounds in Quatrevingt-Treize.

L'Imânus was a pitiless murderer who endured a brutal end, but in Quatrevingt-Treize, those who only intend to kill receive the same punishment as those who have viciously put people to death. The crew of the *Claymore* seek to eradicate revolutionaries, but before they have the opportunity to do so they are struck down by the very weapon they had intended for their enemies. The rebellious cannon can be said to commit a gross act of treachery against its own ship, but this is a vessel that also practises deceit:

> "*the Claymore*, était en apparence une corvette de charge, mais en réalité une corvette de guerre...Elle avait été construite à deux fins, ruse et force; tromper, s'il est possible, combattre, s'il est nécessaire [...] rien ne se voyait au dehors" (XV, p. 295).

This ship's duplicity is suggested in its name, which signifies a "Scottish two-edged broadsword".[e] Moreover, the *Claymore* is a type of French craft, and this disparity between its name and its form highlights its lack of integrity. By being forced to learn that the strength upon which they

depended was a profound liability to them, and by suffering the irreparable damage to the ship and the loss of life that they had intended for others, the *Claymore*'s crew receive a humiliating, crushing punishment.

The cannon is the concretisation of the crew's desire to kill and its frenzied escape manifests the irrepressible power which such violent determination acquires. The cannon is an inert metal cylinder and yet it is invigorated: "vous ne pouvez pas le tuer, il est mort; et en même temps, il vit. Il vit d'une vie sinistre" (XV, p. 302). Its intense, furious ardour is also exhibited by the French battling against each other in the Terror, but the violent energy that vivifies the escapee cannon is testament to the inhumanity of the people of 1793. *La caronade* demonstrates that brutal intent becomes so mighty that it dominates the men who animated it and that it is completely out of their control. Those on board the *Claymore* had been the masters of the cannon, but its liberation renders them its slaves: "cet esclave éternel se venge" (XV, p. 302).

A sinister feature of the cannon's tyranny is the manner in which it slays the hands on deck. The cannon was intended to be no more than an inanimate object in the service of man, but it has transformed itself into a "bête surnaturelle", "une machine qui se transforme en monstre" (XV, p. 302). The method of execution employed by this living armament was also not devised for it by men. The cannon reveals to the terrified hands on deck that it has no need of their intervention to end life. It does so independently and efficiently:

> "la caronade, lancée par le tangage, fit une trouée dans ce tas d'hommes et en écrasa quatre du premier coup, puis, reprise et décochée par le roulis, elle coupa en deux un cinquième misérable" (XV, p. 303).

The cannon demonstrates that it is a lethal force without ammunition; its weight and momentum are sufficient to kill. The murderousness of the cannon's density reinforces Hugo's assertion in Ce que dit la Bouche

d'Ombre, "le mal, c'est la matière". The cannon makes no distinction between the wooden "muraille" (XV, p. 302) of the ship and the human beings it shreds, so it shows its utter contempt for its creators. Moreover, the worthlessness of life on board is further conveyed by the suggestion that this savagery is no more than entertainment: "il pesait dix mille, et il ricoche comme une balle d'enfant" (XV, p. 302). The implication is that there is relish in the massacre for this product of the human urge for progress. The Sadeian pleasure is such that the cannon relentlessly mutilates its victims, emphasising that its strength is superior to friable flesh: "les quatre roues passaient et repassaient sur les hommes tués, les coupaient, les dépeçaient et les déchiquetaient, et des cinq cadavres avaient fait vingt tronçons qui roulaient à travers la batterie" (XV, p. 303). The violence it inflicts is so extreme that the very dead protest against it: "les têtes mortes semblaient crier" (XV, p. 303). The crew of the *Claymore* did intend to kill their enemies, but the cannon kills in such a savage manner that this *lex talionis* must be considered as a very rough form of justice indeed.

La caronade is only finally halted by a bundle of "faux assignats" (XV, p. 305), so that this treacherous assault is terminated by more deceit. Hugo seems to indicate that once evil is at work, the forces of good do not have the capacity to eradicate it.

La caronade is a caution against unrestrained savagery, but its import is appreciated only by the reader. Although they were at once the witnesses to and the potential victims of the malevolence that they had created, the actions of the sailors who survive *la caronade* can be seen to approve rather than condemn violence. Their leader immediately establishes a harsh, punitive attitude by executing the gunner, so that the human slaughter committed by the cannon is continued by the most influential

figure on the ship, and he could have dissuaded his men from behaving aggressively.

All of those on board almost lost their lives because of *la caronade*, yet they still determine to kill others. "La corvette n'était presque plus qu'une épave" (XV, p. 309) but it is prepared for battle (XV, p. 311) by the crew, so that after narrowly escaping demolition by its own cannon, the *Claymore* is condemned to inevitable destruction by other guns on enemy ships. The will to murder their political opponents leads those on board the *Claymore* to ultimately commit an act of suicide.

The complete lack of appreciation of the implicit message of *la caronade* indicates that the compulsion to do evil cannot be easily banished by the intellect. Disaster which could have been averted is multiplied and this tragic failure sums up the rest of Quatrevingt-Treize. As a metaphor for human ferocity, *la caronade* suggests that man's violent desires will end by subjugating him. They impel him to design lethal instruments, but these then prove hard to eradicate. Hugo thus reveals the futility of pretexts for violence: all those who seek to destroy will be destroyed without mercy.

The *Claymore* purposefully intended the destruction of revolutionaries, but even those who do not consciously premeditate murder are punished with death in Quatrevingt-Treize. In 'A Paris', the consequences of a provincial woman's ponderings are anticipated: "ce Laurent Basse...qui, le 13 juillet, environ quinze jours après ce 28 juin, devait asséner un coup de chaise sur la tête d'une femme nommée Charlotte Corday, laquelle en ce moment-là était à Caen, songeant vaguement" (XV, p. 352).[7] Violence awaits this woman in Paris, because of the assassination that she plots many leagues away. This prediction of punishment is succeeded by a retrospective of Charlotte Corday's destiny in 'En Vendée', so that her

inability to escape destruction is accentuated. The vengeful assault on her by Laurent Basse is rendered insignificant, because it was succeeded by the severer retribution visited by the *guillotine*:

> "juillet s'écoula, août vint, un souffle héroïque et féroce passait sur la France, deux spectres venaient de traverser l'horizon, Marat un couteau au flanc, Charlotte Corday sans tête, tout devenait formidable" (XV, p. 426).

This quotation suggests the speed with which annihilation occurred during the Terror. By taking the life of Marat, his murderess effectively took her own. The inevitable and futile destruction that she brought upon herself and her victim is emphasised by Hugo's syntax, in which he places the two nouns 'Marat' and 'Corday' in apposition. Time is advancing but mankind is being diminished. This man and this woman are no more than ghosts. Charlotte Corday has deprived them both of the potential to love and to procreate. She demonstrates unequivocally that to perform an act of violence upon another human being is to deliver a lethal strike to oneself.

Hugo employs the annals of history in order to show that it is not only murder which brings self-obliteration in the Terror. Charlotte Corday eradicated her political enemy but the regicide Biroteau is involved in the democratic process of government, because he is a member of the *Convention* (XV, p. 372). Yet the legislation for which he is responsible ends his life:

> "Biroteau, qui fit décréter l'abolition de l'inviolabilité, fut ainsi, sans le savoir, le forgeron du couperet, et dressa l'échafaud pour lui-même" (XV, p. 372).

Hugo reveals the danger of any political act during the Terror. Although Biroteau did not personally slay anyone, he is guilty of removing security from his homeland by granting the *guillotine* access to all of its inhabitants, and in so condemning them he merely succeeded in condemning himself. There is the indication that the acts decreed by the *Convention*

deal the same fatal blow as the *guillotine* blade, so that each member effectively has the power of an executioner. The metaphor "le forgeron" prefigures the image "fournaise, mais forge" (XV, p. 377) which Hugo uses to delineate the Revolution, but Biroteau also falls victim to the weapon that he fashioned for others.

Biroteau in particular is testament to the need for empathy and subjectivity. He introduced his new law without any mercy or consideration for the lives of his compatriots and without contemplating that his own existence could also be threatened by such a universal decree. The ruthless actions of Biroteau and Charlotte Corday manifest the defencelessness of the human condition and they only succeeded in rendering their own lives more vulnerable. They failed to recognise that they too were an integral part of the humanity which they violated.

Charlotte Corday and Biroteau had little respect for human life and they had their own lives taken. However, the murder of Marat was the fruit of a daydream and Biroteau made himself his own executioner "sans le savoir", so the misdeeds of Charlotte Corday and Biroteau were not the products of wholly conscious minds. It must be acknowledged that, unlike l'Imânus and the crew of the *Claymore*, these characters did not consciously premeditate murder and yet they are castigated as severely as if they had. There is a very powerful inclination towards human destruction in the cosmos of Quatrevingt-Treize.

Lives were lost as a result of the actions of Corday and Biroteau, but one character in Quatrevingt-Treize dies simply because she attempts to destroy a statue. Even the gesture of abolishing monarchy has fatal consequences for the person enacting it in Quatrevingt-Treize:

> "place Vendôme, une femme, Reine Violet, fut écrasée par Louis XIV au cou duquel elle avait mis une corde qu'elle tirait" (XV, p. 347).

The rope suggests a feigned execution of the stone effigy, but the mock executioner succeeded in ending her own life. There is black humour in this ironic deed of self-obliteration, but Hugo's message is unequivocal: in her hasty and ill-devised attempts to eradicate the tribute to royalty, Reine Violet failed to comprehend that she would bring down a dense mass of stone upon her head, and her thoughtlessness represents that of the French people as a whole. They did not consider that the beheading of Louis XVI, which they intended to liberate the nation, would lead to death and destruction for countless numbers of them. Hugo demonstrates the utter misuse of human energies in certain acts of political allegiance.

This incident does not only reveal the folly of Reine Violet, but that of a leading figure of the Revolution. It is Cimourdain who instigated this lethal vandalism: "ce fut lui qui, deux jours après le 10 août, mena le peuple jeter bas les statues des rois. En tombant elles tuèrent" (XV, p. 347), and he proves indifferent and oblivious to the anguish and destruction of which he is the catalyst, "il avait les yeux bandés comme la Thémis d'Homère" (XV, p. 347). Rigidly devoted to abstract theory, Cimourdain: "savait tout de la science et ignorait tout de la vie" (XV, p. 347) and is unwittingly defeating himself and his cause. Ironically, what those revolutionaries are asserting is actually the power of royalism and many of them will die as a consequence. So Cimourdain is the *agent provocateur* of meaningless destruction that betrays its own cause and the embodiment of the novel and the era it depicts: "Cimourdain, c'est-à-dire 93" (XV, p. 486).

Cimourdain's career demonstrates that humanity must not be subjugated to ideology. The republic he is devoted to is in fact a punitive state, liable to become corrupt and defunct: "de la république de Platon peut-être, et peut-être aussi de la république de Dracon" (XV, p. 346). In

reality, Cimourdain is less dedicated to progress and the future than to catastrophe: "il adorait de loin la catastrophe" (XV, p. 346) and it is apocalyptic anarchy he practises rather than the enlightened philosophy of the Revolution. Since he caused the deaths of many of his *confrères*, Cimourdain deserves to be destroyed by his own hands.

In general, in Quatrevingt-Treize, punishment is much more ambiguous than that which is awarded in Les Travailleurs de la Mer or in L'Homme Qui Rit. Those who have committed murder have their lives taken away from them, but those who only commit minor crimes, such as vandalism, are also punished with death. The cosmos of Quatrevingt-Treize does not, therefore, seek to administer fair punishment and it certainly does not seem concerned with justice. Those who suffer a lethal *lex talionis* for their crimes in Hugo's final novel did not premeditate their misdeeds as deeply as their predecessors in Les Travailleurs de la Mer and L'Homme Qui Rit. Rantaine and Clubin meticulously plan their acts of treachery and the *comprachicos* also deliberately mutilated children. However, Reine Violet is killed because of her inattention, and so too is Biroteau. Charlotte Corday dreamed "vaguement" of killing Marat and l'Imânus was not evil before evil was done to him. The sailors who were killed in *la caronade* and in the ensuing sea battle were only following the orders of their commanders when they mounted the cannons against enemy ships. Moreover, although he is misguided, Cimourdain and all those who kill in Hugo's final novel do so to further a political ideal; they do not seek to enrich themselves like Rantaine, Clubin or the *comprachicos* had done. Although they did not have the purpose or the selfish motive of their predecessors, the murderous of Quatrevingt-Treize receive the same severe castigation. Justice has diminished in Quatrevingt-Treize, and it is malign energies which predominate its cosmos, rather than the concept of fairness.

The Insufficiency of the Punishment of Lex Talionis

However, although most miscreants can thus be seen to be punished in the later novels, *lex talionis* is a punishment which only administers justice to a certain degree. In Les Travailleurs de la Mer and L'Homme Qui Rit, *lex talionis* does not extinguish the evil of the villains it chastises and in Quatrevingt-Treize the fate of the innocent cannot be distinguished from that of the guilty. Punishment is imposed in the later novels but the forces of evil remain active and the oppression of the good has still not ceased, and this is what distinguishes these novels from the earlier ones.

Of course, *lex talionis* is immediately highly satisfying to the readers of Les Travailleurs de la Mer and L'Homme Qui Rit because of the crushing humiliation and banishment that it inflicts. The double punishment would seem to suggest that justice is in operation in the universe and thus that the forces of good prevail over the forces of evil. However, *lex talionis* enables the forces of good to win only a momentary victory in Les Travailleurs de la Mer and L'Homme Qui Rit and that is what I am now going on to show.

The *lex talionis* awarded to Rantaine, Clubin and the *comprachicos* is an evil that is employed to wreak vengeance upon the evil. According to Gilbert Durand, this is exactly the process that restores good:

> "par du négatif on reconstitue du positif, par une négation ou un acte négatif on détruit l'effet d'une première négativité".[10]

This "reconstitution" is only partial in Les Travailleurs de la Mer and L'Homme Qui Rit, however. Although their "propres armes" are used against Rantaine, Clubin and the *comprachicos*, their negative, baneful influence is not destroyed.[11] Rantaine indicates that his destination is "Pasrevenir" (XII, p. 760), but he flees on the *Tamaulipas*, which will transport him to South America (XII, p. 607). Hugo has already stated that criminals who

leave Europe succeed in corrupting exotic, undeveloped nations:

> "la quantité de civilisation qu'un coquin apportait de Paris ou de Londres lui tenait lieu de dot dans les pays primitifs ou barbares, le recommandait, et en faisait un initiateur...Tel banqueroutier sorti d'Europe par ce trou à la lune a reparu vingt ans après grand vizir au Mogol ou roi en Tasmanie" (XII, p. 608).

Rantaine's noxiousness is removed from the society he exploited, but there is reason to believe that it thrives in another distant one.[12] *Lex talionis* did not eradicate Rantaine's evil, but merely displaces it.

The *lex talionis* punishing Clubin and the *comprachicos* prevents them from actively continuing their vice, but it is not extirpated completely. Their malignity succeeds in persisting even after their demise, which suggests the measure of its intensity and also indicates that the forces of evil predominate in the universe. Clubin lies buried in a "cul-de-sac" (XII, p. 745), a tomb that emphasises his failure. His proud unveiling of his hidden soul on the Douvres has been followed by the paring of his mortal frame beneath them: "on eût dit une préparation d'anatomie; toute la chair était éliminée; pas un muscle ne restait, pas un os ne manquait" (XII, p. 746). In death Clubin has been castigated with further *lex talionis*. He who so gleefully enjoyed his self-revelation has been punished by being ruthlessly stripped bare. During his lifetime Clubin indulged in masochistic concealment but in his grave he is covered by the dross of nature: "des moisissures marines tapissaient les trous des yeux. Des patelles avaient laissé leur bave dans les fosses nasales" (XII, p. 746). However, his scant and foul remains have sufficient malevolent power to terrify Gilliatt, even though he has just encountered the living horror of *la pieuvre*:

> "il eut un tressaillement. Il lui sembla voir au fond de ce trou dans l'ombre une sorte de face qui riait" (XII, p. 745).

At first Gilliatt questions the reality of this grimace (XII, p. 745) but

on closer inspection he discovers that there is indeed laughter on the face of this skull: "quelque chose riait en effet. C'était une tête de mort" (XII, p. 746). Clubin formerly disdained the entirety of his race, haughtily convinced of his superior intellect (XII, p. 648), but he now appears to endure the punishment of being derided by nature and the degeneration it brings about.

However, Clubin has diabolic power in this marine graveyard. His remains are the only source of energy there: "il n'y avait dans ce recoin de rocher ni goëmons, ni herbes, ni un souffle d'air. Aucun mouvement. Les dents ricanaient" (XII, p. 746). In this tomb the only vigour to be found is intense laughter on the face of a dead man, and he scorns the living. Immediately after he has slayed the sea monster, Gilliatt witnesses the aftermath of more slaughter. He perceives a hideous skeleton which is testament to a horrific *lex talionis*. Its chest cavity contains no heart, which suggests the depravity of the deceased. It is filled instead with dead crustaceans (XII, p. 746), so that they who destroyed Clubin's body were themselves decimated by the octopus. The irrepressible, punitive transformation of *tueur/tué* is in operation in the universe and the death's head derides Gilliatt because he is fresh from obliterating *la pieuvre*, the killer of the crabs, so that he has unwittingly embroiled himself in this process. The certainty of this *lex talionis* is more emphatically demonstrated when Gilliatt discovers that this human devastation is Clubin, the wrecker of the *Durande*. Clubin is responsible for the disaster that Gilliatt is trying to repair, so his impudence is highly sinister. Clubin cannot conceal that he has been the engineer of his own destruction, but his shamelessness accentuates that man is not aware of the catastrophe he brings upon himself. Gilliatt the hero has been secretive like the villain Clubin: neither of them informed their

society of their intentions with regard to the *Durande*. In its obscure, underwater resting place, Clubin's skeleton looks out as if it were an all-seeing sphinx, and it seems to portend that Gilliatt, another destroyer, will also be destroyed.

Clubin was indifferent to the life of the coastguard murdered by Rantaine and to the lives of all the passengers and crew of the *Durande*, but his punishment is not so severe that it prevents him from intimating to the hero that his own death is inevitable. Clubin is not dispatched to oblivion nor to the inferno: he is the medium conveying the "sombres continuations de la mort" (XII, p. 746). Although he no longer actively pursues his vice, in death he torments the living by exposing the universal degradation and terrors of the grave. Clubin's remains confront Gilliatt with the gruesome end that he too might be forced to suffer.

Clubin is soundly castigated by the *lex talionis* imposed upon him, but at the same time it is of sufficient brutality to suggest a form of cosmic injustice, because it has a terrifying effect upon the benevolent hero also. When it is a distinctly harsh punishment, *lex talionis* bears witness to a propensity towards violence in the universe and merely perpetuates the savagery inflicted by the criminals. The *lex talionis* imposed upon the victims of *la caronade* is of such brutality that it does not resemble justice at all. The cannon wreaks death and destruction, but "cet exterminateur est un jouet" (XV, p. 302) because it is at the mercy of the elements below, like those it harms. It is no more than the executor of the ocean's will, "sous eux le flot, aveugle, dirigeait le combat" (XV, p. 304). The lunging gun is "cette cécité" (XV, p. 305) which is the concretisation of the aimless, gratuitous wildness of the sea. As the tool of the duplicitous ocean, *la caronade* demonstrates that ferocity is not an assertion of the indivdual will but an abandonment of it to the global

forces of evil within the cosmos. The lack of equity in the universe of Les Travailleurs de la Mer is particularly evident at the end of the novel, when the saviour of progress cannot marry his beloved and he subsequently takes his own life. *Lex talionis* intensifies cosmic injustice in Les Travailleurs de la Mer.

In L'Homme Qui Rit, the degree to which justice is done can also be questioned. The absorption of the *comprachicos* into the sea appeared to be suitable retribution for their abandonment of a child, but after their "engloutissement" ("tâchons que nos âmes ne soient pas englouties", XIV, p. 104), Gwynplaine is threatened with "enlisement" (XIV, p. 111) in the snows of Portland. The criminals' punishment is countered by the continual suffering of their victim. The castigation of the villain is not as prolonged as the persecution of the innocent.

Whether justice is done to the *comprachicos* is also in doubt because their evil is not abolished with their deaths. It is only weeks after Clubin's death that his remains have an injurious influence upon Gilliatt, but the *comprachicos'* maleficence lingers for years after their demise. A band of indistinct individuals, "ils étaient de tous les pays" (XIV, p. 49), "impossible de voir s'ils étaient vieux ou jeunes" (XIV, p. 57), "les haillons n'ont pas de sexe" (XIV, p. 57), their wickedness is preserved by the restless and unpredictable sea:

> "tantôt elles [bouteilles à la mer] atteignaient la terre assez vite; tantôt après des années. Cela dépendait des vents et des courants" (XIV, p. 161).

The treachery of the *comprachicos* is displayed, because their "bouteille à la mer" supplies information to the Stuart monarchy, which had threatened them with death.[12] "La mer rend à l'Angleterre tous les services qu'elle peut" (XIV, p. 267), which indicates that the sea and Albion conspire to implement the will of chaos, and the *comprachicos* assist them.

There is no chance or accident concerning the execution of Hardquanonne. The *comprachicos* lost their lives because "leur poids était le fossoyeur" (XIV, p. 103) at sea, but before they drowned Geestemunde ensured that their absent colleague would also endure the terror of excessive density. Geestemunde informs his condemned fellows that the gravity of their sins has killed them, "jetons à la mer nos crimes. Ils pèsent sur nous" (XIV, p. 104). The *comprachicos* are figuratively crushed, but their final testament determines that Hardquanonne will literally be pressed down upon until he is dead. The extreme iniquity of Hardquanonne and his colleagues is concretised in the stone blocks that are piled on his body, but this materialisation is wrought by the *comprachicos* before the sinking of their boat. It is not, therefore, the forces of good which bring Hardquanonne to justice, but the perpetrators of evil.

The inevitability of Hardquanonne's destruction is suggested by his prison. Southwark, or "*Sousouorc*" (XIV, p. 211), evokes a location "deep beneath a sea monster", *orc*, so that Hardquanonne already appears to lie buried under the waves, like his associates who sank with the *Matutina*. When the waters were covering them, the *comprachicos* appeared to be making a full admission of their guilt, but this dying confession was no more than a sentence of death for the absent member of their band, the surgeon Hardquanonne. Their avowal is a travesty of an expression of remorse, because it is written on the very paper that originally sanctioned their atrocity. This "ordre royal" (XIV, p. 267) accentuates the malice that they have shown to their child victims and to their colleague. Geestemunde seemed to be making a full and public declaration of their collective guilt, but he was in fact compiling a document that would singularly damn their "pauvre camarade Hardquanonne" (XIV, p. 85):

> "Hardquanonne est le seul qui sache faire l'opération *Bucca fissa*, et cet enfant est le seul vivant à qui

> elle ait été faite [...] Hardquanonne, lequel sait pertinemment tous ces faits et y a participé comme auteur principal" (XIV, p. 266).

As Professor Brombert has said, "the surviving text is literally the story of a crime".[14] Hugo demonstrates that even in their last moments these criminals were still wishing death upon another of their fellows. They were not going to allow Hardquanonne the generosity of enjoying the freedom to live that eluded them. Their final act was not one of remorse for their crimes nor one of hope for the expiation of their sins. They did not regret their evil energies because they employed them until the very last to wreak vengeance and to destroy.

The end of the *comprachicos'* confession is profoundly sinister, because they conclude, "et que la Très Sainte Vierge nous soit en aide. Ainsi soit-il" (XIV, p. 266). It is not just disquieting that these wretches invoked divine assistance and mimicked holy supplication. What is most disturbing is that these miscreants succeed in condemning Hardquanonne. In L'Homme Qui Rit, the evildoers are not thwarted in their plans by the God of this universe. The cruel have formidable power in L'Homme Qui Rit and the *comprachicos* destroy their colleague although they have been dead for many years. The evil of the *comprachicos* does endure beyond the *lex talionis* that castigates them.

Like his associates, Hardquanonne continues to use his malevolent energies even at the moment of his expiry. The solemnity of the acknowledgment at sea "Pater noster qui es in coelis" (XIV, p. 107) is recalled by the sombre ritual of Hardquanonne's execution, "on eût dit le prêtre et le diacre du supplice, célébrant la messe féroce de la loi" (XIV, p. 260). Another *sacrifié* of this black mass is Gwynplaine. Betrayed by his vindictive colleagues, Hardquanonne is defiant and his dying breath celebrates the very cause of his condemnation, the laughter he fixed upon

Gwynplaine's face: "maintenant ris à jamais. Et lui-même il se mit à rire" (XIV, p. 268).

So Gilliatt and Gwynplaine are both derided by the engineers of their woe. I have already remarked in Chapter Two that the sea appears to humiliate Gilliatt when he commits suicide. The epitome of industry whilst he was alive, Gilliatt is quiescent when he dies, in *la Chaise Gild-Holm-'Ur*, the lethal seat wrought by the sea. Despite his formidable victory over wind and sea at the *Douvres*, he failed to win Déruchette and the rising tide scorns all his diligence as it effortlessly takes his life.

In *la cave pénale*, Gwynplaine is forced to encounter a man who is being tortured to death for his crime against him. Gwynplaine could have expected Hardquanonne to acknowledge that he is a person to be pitied by admitting his assault upon him and begging his forgiveness for it. Although he is about to be judged by God because his meeting with his Maker is imminent, Hardquanonne asserts that Gwynplaine's visage is not a source of regret to him, but a source of intense pleasure. By carving a permanent grimace on a young boy's face, Hardquanonne boldly disobeyed all laws of morality and his laughter in his condemned cell is an emphatic defiance of his victim, judges and torturers. Hardquanonne's raucous explosion is an expression of disdain for his victim's misery and it indicates to Gwynplaine that he will never cease to be an object of ridicule. Gwynplaine's confrontation with Hardquanonne is particularly cruel. Since his attacker rejected his last opportunity to apologise to him, Hugo indicates that it is unlikely Gwynplaine will ever be respected for his humanity or suffering. The rearranged matter on his face will dictate his existence.

Hardquanonne's death is a continuation of the intense pitilessness that typified his life and his last merciless act is to assure Gwynplaine

that he is his own tainted creation. Hardquanonne is an anti-father, supplanting Clancharlie and destroying his son. Although the *comprachicos* and Hardquanonne are all executed, their deaths are the attestation rather than the punishment of their evil. Punishment elevates the villain and oppresses the innocent, so the forces of good are not triumphant. Moreover, the lack of difference between their living and their passing suggests that their maleficence is so intense it will survive them. As de Sade suggested, *lex talionis* is inadequate:

> "la paresse et l'imbécillité des législateurs leur firent imaginer la loi du talion. Il était bien plus simple de dire: *Faisons-lui ce qu'il a fait*, que de proportionner spirituellement et équitablement la peine à l'offense".[15]

What is needed rather, according to de Sade, is the infliction of more severe pain than has been caused by the malefactor. In his last novels, Hugo appears to agree with him, but also to fear that the forces of evil elude the punishment they deserve, because the forces of good are inferior to them.

There appears therefore to be little relation between the fate of villains and cosmic justice. Rantaine and Hardquanonne are not castigated because of the universal forces of good but because of the evil energies of Clubin and the *comprachicos*. And if in society men show each other little mercy, in Les Travailleurs de la Mer Hugo demonstrates that in nature creatures such as the crabs and *la pieuvre* are indifferent to each other. Moreover, justice should preclude the vexation of the innocent. Yet here the chastisement of Rantaine, Clubin and Hardquanonne will bring grief to the guileless natives of South America as to Gilliatt and Gwynplaine. No longer are the villains obliterated as definitively and as satisfactorily as they were by the narratives of the earlier novels.

The Harsh and Unjust Treatment of the Innocent

In Quatrevingt-Treize, characters such as Charlotte Corday and l'Imânus ravage whilst they are alive, but leave no tangible vestige of their destructiveness behind them, unlike Clubin and the *comprachicos*. However, despite such effective closures, the universe of Quatrevingt-Treize still appears to be an unjust one because of its inequitable and even brutal treatment of the virtuous and the helpless.

The conclusion to Quatrevingt-Treize emphasises this absence of justice. In Les Travailleurs de la Mer, the Almighty responded to the exhausted hero's appeal for "grâce" (XII, p. 752) to the extent that Gilliatt was ultimately able to return to Guernsey with the *Durande*'s engine, but in Quatrevingt-Treize the many desperate cries for mercy are ignored and the young hero is guillotined:

> "une clameur s'éleva: Grâce! grâce! Quelques-uns tombèrent à genoux; d'autres jetaient leurs fusils et levaient les bras vers la plate-forme où était Cimourdain. Un grenadier cria en montrant la guillotine:-Reçoit-on des remplaçants pour ça? Me voici" (XV, p. 508).

As a result, it appears that the justice dispensed by the cosmos of Les Travailleurs de la Mer is very different to that administered in Quatrevingt-Treize. Gilliatt dies but he has saved the work of progress; Gauvain on the other hand only sacrifices himself to save a reactionary who the reader knows will continue to kill as he has done before. So virtue is survived by active virulence in

In Hugo's final novel, it is the injustice of the cosmos that is forcefully suggested by the harshness suffered by the most defenceless characters. Professor Brombert has commented that in the society of Quatrevingt-Treize "cruelty has become epidemic. The guillotine reigns".[14] A tide of wrath surges through the novel and it engulfs both the guilty and the guiltless. After shooting their mother and leaving her

for dead, Lantenac and his men take the Fléchard children hostage and abandon them in a library which they would transform into an inferno. And if evil is done to these infants by their captors, nature treats them no more benevolently: the children pick berries from an overhanging bush, but its thorns cut their fingers:

> "Georgette tendit à René-Jean son doigt où perlait une petite goutte de sang et dit en montrant la ronce:
> -Pique.
> Gros-Alain, piqué aussi, regarda la ronce avec défiance et dit:-C'est une bête" (XV, pp. 439-440).[17]

To satisfy their pangs of hunger, the children have to endure injury, and in case the reader thinks the example frivolous, Hugo insists on interjecting, "rien pour rien" (XV, p. 439). When he then hears the battle raging outside their prison, René-Jean declares "c'est le mondieu qui fait ça" (XV, p. 438). His infantile contraction suggests "le monde de Dieu", and the remark is powerfully ironic in the context of the assault outside.

In the vision of this novel, men cannot defend themselves against the fury of the Terror, and such cataclysms of history are indifferent to the countless lives that they expend: "les événements dictent, les hommes signent" (XV, p. 379). Hugo indicates that "le rédacteur énorme et sinistre de ces grandes pages a un nom, Dieu, et un masque, Destin" (XV, p. 380), a god who determines unwarranted bloodshed and would even conceal his identity with a mask. No god of compassion appears to exist in Quatrevingt-treize. Injustice is the terrible but undeniable inevitability for the individuals in this universe and the end of the novel reinforces this chilling reality. The selfless hero must die because he has saved a sanguinary general who is free to commit yet more atrocities. The evil energy of Lantenac evades harsh treatment, which instead is imposed upon the benevolent and Lantenac's victims remain oppressed. The lives of the Fléchard children and their mother are still in jeopardy at the end of the

novel: they have no guarantee of security. The unstable situation delineated at the beginning of the novel has therefore not progressed. Cosmic injustice perpetuates a state of chaos in Quatrevingt-Treize.

The bleak universe of Quatrevingt-Treize suggests that the pessimistic outlook Hugo had in the 1860s intensified after the thousands of deaths resulting from the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune.

That injustice permeates the cosmos of Hugo's final novel is powerfully demonstrated by the experiences of the elderly beggar Tellmarch.[1e.] His encounter with Lantenac does indeed result in a savage ambush, and many people are put to death, not just one man. "March" is also suggestive of the advance of an army and Lantenac orders his men to massacre an entire village in his feudal domain.

Tellmarch shows extreme kindness to Lantenac. The old beggar recognises that the fugitive before him is his antithesis, "j'en suis le mendiant, et vous en êtes le seigneur" (XV, p. 327) but the civil war renders the destitute more immediately powerful than the wealthy aristocrat who pleads with the poor man for his life: "livrez-moi, dit le marquis" (XV, p. 327). This situation would have been the reverse before the Revolution, but Tellmarch indicates that the aristocracy did not display such clemency:

> "tenez, moi, pour un méchant coup de fusil tiré à un chevreuil du roi, j'ai vu pendre un homme qui avait une femme et sept enfants" (XV, p. 329).

The marquis is not treated with rancour because of the transgressions of his class, however. Tellmarch does not reject Lantenac as his opposite. He takes pity on an individual in more urgent need than himself: "nous voilà frères, monseigneur. Je demande du pain, vous demandez la vie. Nous sommes deux mendiants" (XV, p. 328). Lantenac is completely surrounded by enemies, but Tellmarch alone saves his life: "à la métairie vous seriez

fusillé. Chez moi vous dormirez" (XV, p. 328). Tellmarch makes an utterly altruistic act in granting Lantenac his life, because the reward he would receive for betraying him would remove him definitively from poverty:

> "-et que quelqu'un qui me livrerait ferait sa fortune?
> -Eh bien, après?" (XV, p. 328)

Tellmarch has only ever known deprivation (XV, p. 330) and yet by redeeming Lantenac he condemns himself to eternal cold and hunger.

Tellmarch's deed is more remarkable still because he saves the author of his misery. He is not only inspired by pity but by gratitude for Lantenac, who once gave him alms. However, Lantenac has eaten well but he has starved his impoverished people: "les hommes grands sont rares; c'est un pays d'hommes petits, la Bretagne" (XV, p. 329). It is Lantenac who is responsible for Tellmarch's need: "on est des fois des vingt-quatre heures sans manger" (XV, p. 330). Despite Tellmarch's clemency, "je vous dois la vie, je vous la rends" (XV, p. 330) Hugo unequivocally reproves Lantenac for neglecting his people. Hugo uses repetition to assert that redemption has been performed by Tellmarch, not by Lantenac:

> "-c'est vrai, vous me sauvez.
> -Oui, je vous sauve, monseigneur" (XV, p. 330).

He who wielded absolute might is awarded justice by the lowliest of men whom he has oppressed. Tellmarch has least reason to be clement, and yet the mercy he gives is of the highest order.

Lantenac does not reciprocate his saviour's bounteous compassion and he rewards Tellmarch's infinite humanity by razing of the village of Herbe-en-Pail:

> "au milieu de la cour, il y avait un monceau noir,
> vaguement modelé d'un côté par la flamme, de l'autre
> par la lune; ce monceau était un tas d'hommes; ces
> hommes étaient morts" (XV, p. 335).

Critics place much emphasis on Lantenac's rescue of the *petits Fléchards*, but little reference is made to this atrocity that he authorises, or to the

fact that this is his reaction to his own rescue.[19] This ruthless deed demonstrates that Lantenac slays after he has been shown mercy himself, which indicates that the ending of the novel is not as positive as it has frequently been suggested. Tellmarch emphasised to Lantenac that they were antitheses, but this did not prevent him from being lenient. Yet Lantenac devastates Herbe-en-Pail because he recognised its inhabitants only as the Revolutionary opposition and therefore as the enemy to be exterminated. Tellmarch showed Lantenac the cosmic law of good and the right to life of every human being, but Lantenac's promise "je viens ici pour faire le bien" (XV, p. 330) violates universal benevolence because his definition of good involves the obliteration of all republicans: "mais surtout dis-leur de tuer, de tuer, de tuer" (XV, p. 321). Lantenac's benevolence is the massacre of countless individuals, so that Tellmarch's singular kindness results in immeasurable ill.[20] Such a *volte-face* is not indicative of a fair universe.

Tellmarch's reward is particularly unjust because he is made to realise the import of his action. He personally examines the corpses as if he cannot believe that his act of charity has produced such virulence and such carnage:

> "Tellmarch passa cette revue des cadavres, sans en omettre un seul; tous étaient criblés de balles" (XV, p. 336).

Tellmarch is forced to appreciate that his liberation of one man has ended the lives of many, because that individual was a mass murderer.

Tellmarch believed that he was a saviour, but he is an executioner. This revelation inspires fear in the reader, because it demonstrates that the desire to do good can bring catastrophe and that human judgment is highly fallible. Tellmarch justifiably reproaches the heaven that presided over his dreadful error: "Tellmarch leva les yeux au ciel et murmura entre

ses dents:-si j'avais su!" (XV, p. 337). He would have been kinder to the dead of Herbe-en-Pail if he had sentenced Lantenac to death.

Although Tellmarch has witnessed the disaster that he has inadvertently caused, he is not dissuaded from being benevolent. He tends to the gravely wounded Michelle Fléchard, but more bitterness is reserved for him because her anguish for her kidnapped children is also his indirect responsibility (XV, p. 415). Whilst Tellmarch continues to be kind, the murderer he spared kills relentlessly. The cosmos of Quatrevingt-Treize is evidently without justice, and Tellmarch is perhaps not unaware of this when he told Lantenac: "je sais qu'il y a une dette et qu'on la paye. Voilà tout" (XV, p. 329).

The debt that Tellmarch pays is indeed a heavy one. He is forced to acknowledge that he has succeeded in magnifying the iniquity of a war for which he feels antipathy (XV, p. 329). He is taught that a deed can only be good if its object is beneficent and he unleashed a man dedicated to evil:

> "et en guerre civile, c'est la pire qui est la meilleure. La bonté d'une guerre se juge à la quantité de mal qu'elle fait" (XV, p. 321).

Tellmarch exists in an inverted world, in which his act of redemption fills him with profound remorse. There is no equity in the universe of Quatrevingt-Treize because those who strive to do good afflict themselves and others, whereas those who are evil conquer and destroy: "une bonne action peut donc être une mauvaise action. Qui sauve le loup tue les brebis" (XV, p. 414).

Looking back on the earlier novels, one can hardly doubt that the cosmic justice suggested in Les Misérables, for example, wholly diverges from that implied in Quatrevingt-Treize. Le père Champmathieu is one innocent individual who is spared from enduring a harsh penalty by the

benignity of Jean Valjean. Yet many individuals lose their homes, their children and even their lives because of the benevolent nature of Tellmarch. The reader is left in no doubt that the noble Jean Valjean goes to heaven, "sans doute, dans l'ombre, quelque ange immense était debout, les ailes déployées, attendant l'âme" (XI, p. 996). However, no such reward is given to Tellmarch. The reader last witnesses him when Michelle Fléchard leaves him to search for her children: "elle répondit:-je vais les chercher. Il n'essaya pas de la retenir" (XV, p. 416). Jean Valjean attained peace in a heavenly apotheosis but only further helplessness awaited the elderly redeemer of life in Quatrevingt-Treize. The just universe of Les Misérables has ceased to exist.

The Triumph of the Villains

Critics would argue that the benevolent and the innocent suffer unduly in all of Hugo's novels. Brutality is inflicted upon Esméralda, Fantine and Jean Valjean, and upon many other benign characters. Their persecutors are all brought to justice, however, because Frollo and Javert are obliterated at the end of Notre-Dame de Paris and Les Misérables. What distinguishes Hugo's final two novels in particular from their predecessors is that they delineate malefactors who triumph with total impunity. In Chapter One of this thesis I pointed out the ascendancy of the evil female characters in the later novels, but I would now like to turn my attention to the victory of the male villains who are more active in the narrative than their female counterparts. The sense of cosmic justice that is implied by the destruction of the villains in Notre-Dame de Paris and Les Misérables is not sustained in the later novels.

Clubin is the principal criminal of Les Travailleurs de la Mer and he is eradicated by the omnipotent sea. However, the principal villains of L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize are prospering at the conclusions of

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these narratives, which indicates that malign power increases during these works. Justice could not be established because the forces of evil were mighty enough to withstand it.

The ruthless killer who is responsible for much of the destruction in Quatrevingt-Treize is alive and active at the end of the novel. Lantenac is interpreted as a character who undergoes a transformation after rescuing the Fléchard children, but there are no grounds for believing that he will act with any more humanity than he has done previously.[21] In the condemned cell where he has left other men to die, Lantenac asserts his devotion to the *Ancien Régime*:

> "ah! nous étions des justiciers, nous autres. On peut voir ici sur le mur la marque des roues d'écartèlement. Nous ne plaisantions pas. Non, non, point d'écrivassiers!" (XV, p. 492).

This bluster manifests that the rescue of the children has not altered Lantenac, and he is not changed by the self-sacrificing action of his great-nephew. Upon his liberation, Lantenac "cherche s'il a bien ou mal agi" (XV, p. 495) but "après quelques secondes de rêverie attentive...il leva sa main droite...et dit: Ma foi! Et il s'en alla" (XV, p. 495). Lantenac makes a pledge to his faith, but his belief is in the *Ancien Régime*, not in God. When Halmalo kissed the fleur-de-lys Lantenac told him "tu baises le crucifix" (XV, p. 319). Despite the claim that Lantenac is converted to humanitarianism, the text of Quatrevingt-Treize indicates that Lantenac is determined to inflict still more archaic barbarity upon the French people even after his rescue of the infants. Gauvain himself states that he is guilty of freeing "le meurtrier de la patrie" (XV, p. 497).

Lantenac's salvation of children from a fire has a precedent in Les Misérables. Jean Valjean "s'était jeté dans le feu, et avait sauvé, au péril de sa vie, deux enfants qui se trouvaient être ceux du capitaine de

gendarmerie" (XI, pp. 161-162). The difference between the two forms of justice dispensed by Les Misérables and by Quatrevingt-Treize is visible here. Saving the policeman's family saves Jean Valjean: "on n'avait pas songé à lui demander son passeport" (XI, p. 162), whereas rescuing the Fléchard children condemns Lantenac. However, this is only the first of many charitable acts that Jean Valjean performs for the provincial town of Montreuil-sur-Mer, but Lantenac scourges France before his daring deed and will continue to do so after it.

Lantenac is a character who does not change and he is the embodiment of reaction. His character is as pitiless at the end of the novel as it was at its inception. It is unjust that his virulence remains but also that his survival costs the progressive young hero's life.

There is no actual delineation of Lantenac's continuing murderousness after Gauvain has released him, but there are precedents in the novel to suggest this endless savagery. Those who insist that the rescue of the children brings about a moral transformation in Lantenac fail to mention that he has saved life before, to no moral purpose. Lantenac was in grave personal jeopardy when he pulled the children from the fire but he also risked his own life on board the *Claymore* to prevent the gunner being crushed to death:

> "il avait saisi un ballot de faux assignats, et, au risque d'être écrasé, il avait réussi à le jeter entre les roues de la caronade" (XV, p. 305).

After saving the gunner, Lantenac orders his execution: "maintenant, qu'on fusille cet homme" (XV, p. 307). By killing the very man he has just reprieved, Lantenac manifests his extreme ruthlessness.

The text of Quatrevingt-Treize repeatedly portrays Lantenac as someone who is saved rather than someone who redeems others. He is saved by the crew of the *Claymore*, by Tellmarch, by Halmalo, by the self-sacrifice of

l'Imânus during the siege of *la Tourgue*, and he is saved from the *guillotine* by Gauvain. Countless men die in a futile battle at sea to preserve their "chef de la Vendée" (XV, p. 312). He neither appreciates their mass sacrifice nor the preciousness of life itself because of his annihilation of the people in Herbe-en-Pail. It is this incident in particular which renders Lantenac a deeply odious criminal. A peasant who survived informed Tellmarch that Lantenac and his men "étaient contents" (XV, p. 336). Lantenac deserved to be destroyed for his atrocities in this village alone. In Les Contemplations, Hugo had professed:

> "L'assassin pâlirait s'il voyait sa victime;
> C'est lui".[22]

In Quatrevingt-Treize, however, Hugo delineates a man who is a mass murderer and he does not fall victim to his own violence.

Although Lantenac does not perish, he is at least menaced with destruction and only narrowly escapes the *guillotine*. The forces of justice could be said to have striven to assert themselves and attempt to punish Lantenac for his iniquity. However, there is a malefactor in the later novels who is not even threatened with any form of castigation and his power is even increasing at the end of the novel. Barkilphedro is quite unique among Hugolian villains, because he is the only major evil character in a novel who is not made to suffer any penalty for his crimes. He has a counterpart in the eponymous villain of Torquemada, who similarly triumphs with impunity. This drama was written in 1869 during the composition of L'Homme Qui Rit. These two works depict a dark cosmos in which the very concept of justice seems to be absent.

Barkilphedro is the most powerful character in L'Homme Qui Rit: "la cour est un engrenage. Barkilphedro y devint moteur" (XIV, p. 165). England is dominated by the court, so the entire country is governed by the evil energies of this invisible and cunning servant (XIV, p. 165).

Barkilphedro holds sway over the monarchy. He has the confidence of the Queen, the duchess Josiane and Lord David Dirry-Moir and each of them believes that he is faithful to them only (XIV, p. 157). A monarch wishes to harm his people because he obeys "une mauvaise âme quelconque qui du dehors lui bourdonne dans l'oreille" (XIV, p. 164). It is not therefore Queen Anne who predominates Stuart England, but Barkilphedro, the "mouche sombre de l'abîme" (XIV, p. 164).

It could also be said that Barkilphedro's maleficence presides over the entire globe. His situation as "déboucheur de bouteilles de l'océan" (XIV, p. 158) is highly important to him, because Hugo remarks that "par l'océan on tenait le monde" (XIV, p. 136). Barkilphedro performs the rôle of a wicked alchemist, selecting material from the sea to combine with the confusion of the English court. He thus has the capacity to increase the volatility in England and to destabilise the world. Barkilphedro is an evil character in an unparalleled position of strength.

Barkilphedro is indeed one of the most execrable characters ever to spring from the Hugolian imagination. "Un irlandais qui avait renié l'Irlande" (XIV, p. 160), Barkilphedro is the sycophant of the Queen who brutalises his people: "les lois contre l'Irlande émanées de la reine Anne furent atroces" (XIV, p. 154). Barkilphedro is the arch traitor. He is also an abomination of nature: "sorte d'hippopotame singe" (XIV, p. 160). The utter disparity between these two beings suggests the extraordinary depravity of this figure. He is more bestial than human. Barkilphedro seeks "un coeur à percer" (XIV, p. 166). "Empoisonner de temps en temps la piqûre" (XIV, p. 164) amuses him and he intends to bury his "griffes dans Josiane" (XIV, p. 170). Such violence conveys Barkilphedro's absolute desire for total destruction: "une haine est toute la haine" (XIV, p. 166). Barkilphedro is a highly dangerous character

because he is the medium of universal evil. He demonstrates to the reader that spite has the same capacity as love, "haïr est aussi fort qu'aimer" (XIV, p. 164) and this is a highly disturbing revelation. Barkilphedro has the complexion (XIV, p. 163) and the slyness of a serpent "une de ces fortunes vipérines était échue à Barkilphedro" (XIV, p. 163). Hugo suggests that all energy is possessed by the baneful, but they create nothing positive: "le serpent au repos, couché en rond, figure à la fois l'infini et zéro" (XIV, p. 163). Barkilphedro is a study in the human potential for evil, "notre côté ténèbres est insondable" (XIV, p. 167) and this unfathomable depth mirrors the soaring heights reached by him.

The resentful servant of Josiane bemoans that if he did not plot his revenge against Josiane "il n'y aurait donc plus de justice ici-bas" (XIV, p. 167). However, he does conspire and his plans succeed in diminishing Josiane and in eradicating benevolent, innocent characters also. There is no justice "ici-bas" for the good. In the earlier novels, a villain like Barkilphedro would have been obliterated, but in L'Homme Qui Rit he is able to establish his own profane justice that is ruthless, vindictive destruction.

Barkilphedro's influence had waned prior to the beginning of the narrative, "il avait tâché d'être homme d'église, mais avait échoué" (XIV, p. 157), but throughout the diegesis of L'Homme Qui Rit Barkilphedro's power is in the ascendant. His injuriousness strikes at those who do not merit his cruelty. Rather than impede or offend him, Josiane has furthered Barkilphedro's career and yet he desires his benefactor to be his victim: "certes, il était urgent de châtier la Josiane" (XIV, p. 169). Barkilphedro passionately yearns not only to punish Josiane, but to rack her body with the most agonising torture:

> "faire subir à Josiane ce qu'on appellerait aujourd'hui une vivisection, l'avoir, toute convulsive, sur sa table

d'anatomie, la disséquer, vivante" (XIV, p. 166).

Barkilphedro yearns to indulge in the operation practised by the *comprachicos*. They performed their amateur surgery to enrich themselves, but Barkilphedro wishes to obtain intense, sadistic gratification from the laceration of Josiane's flesh. What is noticeable is the degree to which Barkilphedro seeks to destroy Josiane. "Une égratignure, que c'est peu, à qui voudrait toute la pourpre de l'écorchure vive" (XIV, p. 171). He intends to rend every fibre of her flesh, as if to obliterate her very soul. Hugo indicates the perversity of Barkilphedro's sadism, because the torment he wishes for Josiane had no name, "ce qu'on appellerait aujourd'hui une vivisection". Unlike Lethierry who created works of progress, Barkilphedro is the innovator of pure evil. Barkilphedro is perhaps the most depraved of all of Hugo's criminals.

Like Clubin, Barkilphedro is "un envieux...un ingrat" (XIV, p. 166), but he is a much more disquieting individual than his predecessor. Clubin sought considerable personal gain from his iniquity; Barkilphedro expresses his indifference even to injuring himself: "le bourreau, manieur de fer rouge, a sa part de brûlure, et n'y prend pas garde. Parce que l'autre souffre davantage, on ne sent rien" (XIV, p. 167). Frollo cut into his own breast because others were torturing the woman he loved. Barkilphedro is "un peu amoureux" (XIV, p. 172) of Josiane, but he wants personally to torture her, even if he wounds himself in the process. The evil energies that are employed in L'Homme Qui Rit are much more sinister than those in Notre-Dame de Paris. Barkilphedro adheres to the maxim "fais ce qui nuit, advienne que pourra" (XIV, p. 167) and he inspires deep fear in the reader. The prospect of self-obliteration does not deter Barkilphedro from his policy of destruction. He is a determined agent of apocalypse.

Josiane's discovery that she must marry Gwynplaine is her treacherous

servant's victory over her and it indicates the measure of baneful might in the universe of L'Homme Qui Rit. The humiliation that Barkilphedro forces Josiane to endure punishes her for her attempts to seduce Gwynplaine, so that castigation is again the fruit of vindictiveness, not of justice. However, the inhabitants of the *Green-Box* also suffer because of the vengeful nature of Barkilphedro and they are completely innocent and undeserving of any harsh treatment. Barkilphedro effectively kills Gwynplaine. He informs him that the only identity he has ever known has ceased to be (XIV, p. 281). He deals Ursus a severely cruel blow with his falsehood "Gwynplaine est mort" (XIV, p. 302).

Critics have given a positive interpretation to the conclusion of L'Homme Qui Rit, because of the apotheosis of Gwynplaine and Dea.[23] However, it is directly because of Barkilphedro's fiendishness that the two lovers die. Gwynplaine's absence has fatally struck Dea, but he was removed from the *Green-Box* on the instructions of Barkilphedro. A chapter heading unequivocally states that it is Barkilphedro who kills Gwynplaine's beloved: 'Barkilphedro a visé l'aigle et a atteint la colombe'. There is no justice in the universe because the malefactor succeeds in striking down the personification of innocence and peace. The extreme degree of his virulence is also manifested. He does not fail to smite 'l'aigle', or Josiane. Dea's expiry renders existence intolerable for Gwynplaine and after being "killed" by Barkilphedro, he takes his own life. Gwynplaine and Dea attain paradise but only because of the devious machinations of Barkilphedro, who banishes them from the mortal world. Eternal life remunerates the two lovers for their sufferings on earth, but the separation that was fatal to them was the work of the villain of L'Homme Qui Rit, and he is still flourishing.

The injustice in the human world of L'Homme Qui Rit is also suggested

by the divergence in the fortunes of Barkilphedro and Ursus. The sinister creature of the court has achieved his aims at the end of the novel and his ascendancy is unquestionable. Ursus has shown unceasing selflessness, "quand il voyait un pauvre mourant de faim, il lui donnait tous les liards qu'il avait" (XIV, p. 44) and yet the pitiless and egotistical Barkilphedro deprives him of his two adopted children. Ursus makes no progress: he is without human companionship at the end of the novel as at its beginning. Moreover, not only is Ursus alone, but he is *en route* for a country where he will almost certainly be put to death:

> "heureusement Ursus n'était jamais allé dans les Pays-Bas. On l'y eût certainement voulu peser pour savoir s'il avait le poids normal au delà ou en deçà duquel un homme est sorcier [...] trop lourd, vous étiez pendu; trop léger, vous étiez brûlé" (XIV, p. 36).

Satisfaction and increasing might are the punishments inflicted upon Barkilphedro, whilst Ursus is rewarded for his compassionate deeds with desolation and an almost certain gruesome death. Tellmarch is reminiscent of Ursus, "je suis...un peu médecin, je connais les herbes...et cela me fait passer pour sorcier" (XV, p. 329), but both of these philanthropists suffer whilst their transgressors advance without any chastisement.[24] The good are expelled or defeated in L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize and unprecedented virulence reigns supreme. Malevolent energies have all ceased to predominate at the end of Han d'Islande, Notre-Dame de Paris and Les Misérables, but in the later novels their strength has been intensified. Justice is done to some extent in the earlier novels, but in their successors fairness appears a forlorn and a forgotten aspiration.

Conclusion

A consideration of the justice that is ultimately dispensed in the later novels reveals a profoundly sombre universe, and particularly in L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize. In the cosmos of all of the later novels,

the desire to commit evil appears more irresistible than the inclination to rectify an unjust situation. When punishment is accorded, it is not imposed by the forces of good but by the relentless, vindictive, malevolent energies and castigation is not of sufficient harshness to utterly terminate the malign influence of the criminal. Malefactors prosper and banefulness is prevalent, but the rare and precious act of benevolence receives a vicious reward and often even death. This injustice reveals a deep division between Hugo's earlier and later novels, because fairness is not present in the successors to Les Misérables. Fortune no longer favours the brave, but the wicked, and kindness is punished as if it were a criminal act.

The complete triumph of the villains in L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize is perhaps inspired by Louis-Napoleon's evasion of punishment and by the atrocities committed during the Commune. The black cosmos of Quatrevingt-Treize was also perhaps instigated by the futile carnage of the war with Prussia. The later novels indicate a conviction in the unjust suffering of the benevolent and the innocent. Hugo had hoped to find a renewed interest in progress, compassion and justice on his return to France in 1870, but instead he observed the internecine slaughter of the Franco-Prussian war and the massacre of the Communards can be seen to have convinced him of the extreme inclemency that men are prepared to show towards their fellows.[28] Malevolence is strong and active at the end of Hugo's final novel. It is inconceivable that "le bon Dieu" would dominate a universe in which evildoers thrive without menace and the innocent suffer for their acts of kindness, yet this is precisely the cosmos delineated in the later novels.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. The "Affaire Doise" vividly demonstrates the barbarity of justice at that time in nineteenth century France. In 1862, Rosalie Doise was convicted of murdering her father. She was not only innocent, but pregnant. Her imprisonment in a tiny, airless cell was inhuman and her baby died. On December 2nd, 1862, a day with fateful resonances for republican exiles, Hugo made an appeal for her, but in vain. Justice for Rosalie Doise was hard labour for life for a crime she did not commit and the loss of her child. Pierre Halbwachs makes the following observations about Hugo's rewards for supporting this case: "aucune suite judiciaire fut donnée aux effroyables révélations de l'affaire Doise. Ceci, d'ailleurs, n'a rien que de normal; jamais la justice n'a fait le procès à la justice" (XII, p. 875).

2. Malevolent energies are not utterly extinguished in Les Misérables, however. Thénardier is banished from his homeland but as a "négrier" (XI, p. 990) he will corrupt and contaminate the New World with his evil. Thénardier's escape with his life suggests an awakening consciousness of the elusive, invincible power of the malevolent.

3. See, for example, Dorval's lengthy deliberation upon the crime of stealing and its punishment in L'Histoire de Juliette. Oeuvres Complètes du Marquis de Sade. Tome Huitième, Au Cercle du Livre Précieux, Paris, MDCCCCLXVI, pp. 117-126: "en volant le pauvre, en dépouillant l'orphelin, en usurpant l'héritage de la veuve, l'homme ne fait qu'user des droits qu'il a reçus de la nature" (p. 121).

4. Olympio, Hachette, Paris, 1954, p. 509.

5. Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo, Editions du Mont Blanc, Geneva, 1943, p. 18. In a footnote to this page, Charles Baudouin considers 'Une tempête sous un crâne' in Les Misérables. In this episode, Hugo unequivocally indicates that subjective experience of maltreatment is the absolute deterrent to maltreating others.

6. The unswerving determination to destroy and be destroyed which l'Imânus manifests to the very last compares with that of Captain Ahab in Herman Melville's Moby Dick:
   > "towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale: to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee" (Collins, London, 1963, p. 477).

   With his last breath, l'Imânus kindles the fuse intended to burn the library and the children inside it.

7. This statement informs us that l'Imânus has endured the same merciless deprivation as Michelle Fléchard. These two characters are the studies of the social disintegration inflicted by civil war, but they are polarised because Michelle Fléchard's maternity renders her defenceless, whereas the celibate male strength of l'Imânus enables him to gain his vengeance for the ills he has suffered.

8. Concise Oxford Dictionary, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1976, p. 185.

9. The unscrupulousness of Laurent Basse is suggested by his surname. Charlotte Corday's banefulness was not the first that Marat encountered. Laurent Basse pries into Marat's private discussion with Robespierre and Danton (XV, p. 352) and it is indicated that his devotion lies with another faction: "Laurent Basse servait Marat, mais il était de l'Evêché" (XV, p. 352).

10. Les Structures Anthropolgiques de l'Imaginaire. Collection Etudes Supérieures, Bordas, Paris, 1969, p. 230.

11. *op. cit.*, p. 230.

12. Rantaine's extradiegetic career in the Americas recalls that of Thénardier.

13. There is a striking divergence between the *comprachicos'* "bouteille à la mer" and that which is the positive subject of a poem by Vigny. In 'La Bouteille à la Mer', Vigny asserts that such a communication prevents the sea from erasing all traces of the lives it takes:
    "Que Dieu peut bien permettre à des eaux insensées
    De perdre des vaisseaux, mais non pas des pensées,
    Et qu'avec un flacon il a vaincu la mort" ('La Bouteille à la Mer', Alfred de Vigny, Oeuvres Poétiques, Garnier Flammarion, Paris, 1978, p. 238).
Vigny's "bouteille à la mer" therefore "conquers death", while its counterpart in L'Homme Qui Rit is no more than a death sentence.

14. Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1984, p. 197.

15. L'Histoire de Juliette, Oeuvres Complètes du Marquis de Sade, Tome Huitième, Au Cercle du Livre Précieux, Paris, MDCCCCLXVI, p. 124.

16. Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1984, p. 207.

17. The pearl is a recurrent image in the later novels, beginning with 'La perle au fond du précipice' (XII,

p. 655) in Les Travailleurs de la Mer but it becomes the product of cruelty in L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatre-vingt-Treize. There is a pearl of frozen milk on the breast of Dea's mother, who died from exposure whilst trying to feed her baby. Yet in L'Homme Qui Rit this pearl remains an object of beauty because it lauds maternity. The drops of blood extracted by the thorns do not embellish the children's fingers, however. The pearl in Les Travailleurs de la Mer is an abstract reference to the truth concerning Clubin, whereas the pearls in L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize portray the ferocity of a society and a natural world which brutalise the most helpless of their inhabitants. Warm milk is frozen and blood is drawn from its veins to form these sinister beads. The unnatural state of these bodily fluids suggests the extreme threat to human life in Hugo's final two novels. There are external forces which seek to wound to the very soul.

18. The first syllable of Tellmarch's name is suggestive of William Tell, the legendary figure of Swiss liberation.

19. See Yves Gohin's introduction to the Laffont edition of Quatrevingt-Treize, *pp. i-v.*

20. As Sandy Petrey has pointed out, "Lantenac's historical good is thus timeless evil. Conversely, the timeless good in Tellmarch's generosity produces the historical evil of a peaceful village's destruction. Fair is foul and foul is fair" (History in the Text: Quatrevingt-Treize, Purdue University Monographs in Romance Languages, Volume III, Amsterdam/John Benjamins B.V., 1980, p. 77).

21. See Yves Gohin's introduction to the Laffont edition of Quatrevingt-Treize.

22. Ce que dit la Bouche d'Ombre, Club Français du Livre IX, p. 377.

23. Léon Cellier has observed: "les épreuves du héros sont terminées. Il n'est plus rien, et il a tout, 'parce que la seule chose qui existe dans la vie, c'est le coeur, et après la vie, c'est l'âme'" (*Chaos Vaincu*, Victor Hugo et le Roman Initiatique, p. 171).

24. Léon Cellier draws our attention to the opinion of Max Milner: "son oeuvre postérieure à 1860, où le satanisme tragique de L'Homme Qui Rit répond au message lumineux des Misérables, montre que le fossé ne fera, désormais, que s'agrandir" (
Initiatique, p. 173. This statement was originally from the thesis Le Diable dans la littérature française.)

25. Yves Gohin has perceived: "écrire Quatrevingt-Treize était donc, dans l'exil retrouvé, donner à son combat

pour l'amnistie des Communards le sens d'une participation au progrès révolutionnaire, et la force définitive d'un testament; c'était inventer le message d'une guerre civile sans doute aussi sauvage que celle de 1871 (mis à ce part ce 'progrès': on n'avait remplacé 'la guillotine par la mitrailleuse', Massin, XVI, p. 1319), mais d'une guerre civile où sa légende familiale l'autorisait à montrer d'un côté comme de l'autre le seul parti dont il rêvait d'être, celui de l'humanité" (Introduction to Gallimard edition, 1979, p. 25).

Chapter Four - The Inversion of Benign Concepts

So far in this thesis, I have endeavoured to demonstrate that the universe of the later novels is darker than that which is delineated in its predecessors. As I have illustrated, in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize Hugo does not treat such subjects as the female, metamorphosis and cosmic justice as positively as he had previously done in his earlier novels. There are topics, however, which are already depicted almost as negatively in the earlier novels as in their successors and in this chapter, I would like to focus on them.

By the time Hugo composed his later novels, some human activities to which he attached sinister import were already a long-established feature of his work. Laughter and dreaming immediately suggest a benign, innocuous significance, but both of these themes are given bleak portrayals in Hugo's novels, poetry and plays. As early as 1829, in Le Dernier Jour d'Un Condamné, dreaming and laughter do not provide the condemned man with even a moment's relief or distraction. His dream of a beldam torments him and the mocking laughter of the bloodthirsty crowd repels him. From the outset of his career, therefore, Hugo was inclined to represent laughter and dreaming as sources of malevolence and the later novels continue this negative depiction of them. In this chapter, it is my intention to indicate the extent to which their malignity has intensified in these works.

Laughter

Of all the subjects under discussion in this thesis, laughter has probably been most widely recognised as a malign activity in Hugo's works. 'La Fête des Fous' in Notre-Dame de Paris is perhaps the most obvious illustration of unconscionable mirth in Hugo's novels, but even in Han d'Islande, which was written in 1823, laughter is not associated with harmless pleasure. Han's laughter suggests his urgent desire to spill the blood of a

defenceless man:

> "le rire farouche du monstre remplit la voûte. Ordener était désarmé.
> As-tu, cria le monstre, quelque chose à dire à Dieu ou au diable avant de mourir?" (II, pp. 289-290).

In 1832, Hugo wrote a play which forcefully conveys the sinister nature of laughter. Le Roi s'amuse portrays a deformed jester who is humiliated by the monarch he had loyally entertained, but there were few performances of this play. Less than three weeks after its opening, Le Roi s'amuse was banned by Louis-Philippe's government. Despite being penalised with censorship, however, Hugo did not desist from depicting laughter negatively. In Châtiments, in the poem 'L'Homme a ri', Napoleon III is punished with the branding iron for his public mockery of Hugo:

> "Tu dis: je ne sens rien! et tu nous railles, drôle!
> Ton rire sur mon nom gaîment vient écumer;
> Mais je tiens le fer rouge et vois ta chair fumer".[1]

This brutal response on Hugo's part to mockery is extremely significant, given Hugo's abolitionist views on torture and execution, as well as in his plea in Châtiments to the French people that they should carry out no retribution against the "bandit féroce" (Châtiments, III, X, L'Empereur s'amuse, Vers 8).[2]

By the middle of the 1860s, therefore, laughter which inspired fear and loathing had become a prominent feature of Hugo's work. Similarly to Louis-Napoleon in 'L'Homme a ri', Hardquanonne is condemned to the agonies of the torture chamber because of the laughter he has contrived to inspire. However, laughter has become much more sinister in the later novels and in L'Homme Qui Rit in particular. It is not only the maliciously scornful villain who suffers its brutality. Many children are irreparably scarred by "le fer" or are physically oppressed in order that the public will ridicule them. Whilst the bodies of infants are savagely violated, the sentence passed upon their molesters does not seem to make them repent of

their wickedness, since Hardquanonne is shown to derive pleasure from his very punishment.

Like their predecessors, the later novels suggest that rather than being representative of harmless pleasure, laughter is the visible and powerfully audible testament to the enjoyment which men gain from harming each other. Laughter has the appearance of joy, but Hugo shows that in reality it is certain agony for the person who incites it or who is made to incite it.

Many critics, including C.W. Thompson, Jean-Pierre Reynaud and Victor Brombert, have already acknowledged the profoudly negative representation of laughter in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize. In his consideration of this subject in L'Homme Qui Rit in his work Ecrire Hugo, Henri Meschonnic observes "ce sont des rires qui font mal" (p. 170) and this assessment could apply to all of the laughter that is illustrated in the later novels, since it often does actual physical harm to those who inspire it.

Scholars have, therefore, already appreciated that the world of the later novels is an inverted one in which comedy springs from agony, as in the Hobbesian theory of laughter which asserts that people are amused by other people's ills. In this section of my thesis, I hope to add to the research which has been done in this area by indicating the extreme degree of the malevolence in the laughter of the later novels, because I do not believe that it has yet been sufficiently appreciated. The negative portrayal of laughter is continued from the earlier novels, but laughter is more sinister in their successors for several reasons. Critics would argue that the mockery of the deformed is a constant in Hugo's works, because Quasimodo is pilloried in Notre-Dame de Paris, and Triboulet is ridiculed in Le Roi s'amuse. However, Quasimodo and Triboulet were born hideous, but

they have many counterparts in L'Homme Qui Rit and they were all made to be so. In Notre-Dame de Paris, Le Roi s'amuse and L'Homme Qui Rit, laughter betrays a lack of compassion for the heteroclite but laughter has become much more important in the society of the later novel. Quasimodo is "cette espèce de cyclope" (IV, p. 53) and laughter is only the effect of "la perfection de sa laideur" (IV, p. 53). In L'Homme Qui Rit, however, laughter is the terrifying *raison d'être* of deformed human beings such as the *comprachicos'* victims:

> "et que faisaient-ils de ces enfants?
> Des monstres.
> Pourquoi des monstres?
> Pour rire.
> Le peuple a besoin de rire" (XIV, p. 45).

Unlike Quasimodo, Gwynplaine "avait été fait exprès" (XIV, p. 183). What is more, Quasimodo's single eye affords him only a limited vision of the mocking crowds, and his deafness prevents him from hearing them. Gwynplaine, on the other hand, can see and hear the crowds' cruel laughter, so he can fully appreciate their disdain for him.

Laughter overwhelms even the innocence of children in L'Homme Qui Rit. The excruciating pain endured by the *comprachicos'* victims is suggested by their barbaric operations (XIV, p. 48) and yet no mention of their screams is made. The silence of the mutilated is countered by the excessive laughter of those who see them (XIV, p. 199). Like Quasimodo, the *comprachicos'* victims inspire immediate hilarity, but this spontaneity has been intentionally arranged in L'Homme Qui Rit. Laughter is the reaction to a design and not to a fortuity in this novel. In L'Homme Qui Rit, laughter is a heinous crime. It is premeditated, and is like a theft, stealing the original identity of a child. Moreover, laughter causes the eradication of the irreplaceable, so it also compares with murder. L'Homme Qui Rit does continue the negative delineation of laughter, but there is

much more determination and work involved in its occurrence.

For those who are made to be the objects of predetermined laughter, possessing a deformed body is not the only anguish to be endured. Laughter is persistently malevolent to those who have been made to inspire it and it inflicts psychological distress upon them after it has physically afflicted them. Gwynplaine's grimace unites the people in an explosion of hilarity (XIV, p. 199), but Gwynplaine is completely excluded. His face brings the people together, but this source of universal pleasure is the reason for Gwynplaine's singular woe. It distinguishes him from all of mankind: "se comparer, c'était ne plus se comprendre" (XIV, p. 184). Like Quasimodo, Gwynplaine is derided because his face is marred, but Gwynplaine's disfigurement is particularly cruel. It is ironically the expression of joy that causes him misery. Gwynplaine must live with the knowledge that those who made him had total contempt for his being. They determined that he would exist as a bitter paradox, who would feel intense grief but would only ever express jocundity.

"La foule ne connaissait que le visage" (XIV, p. 186) of Gwynplaine but his exterior completely obscures his being. It is only Gwynplaine's grotesque face that interests the egotistical crowds and yet their shouts of glee rack Gwynplaine the man. The precise nature of evil in the later novels is suggested by those who are entertained by Gwynplaine. The crowds who flock to see him revel in his rearranged flesh, so that they luxuriate in the reduction of a human to matter, and therefore in Hugo's world to evil, since "le mal, c'est la matière". Hugo reviles laughter because it forcibly demonstrates that men are much more inclined towards materiality rather than spirituality. Those who deride Gwynplaine are clearly not influenced by their intellect or their conscience. They pay no heed to the immense suffering he must have endured because of the imposition of such a

paralysis. Thunderous peals of laughter resound from their viscera when they witness Gwynplaine's mouth and the Tarrinzeau field dissolves into a chaotic mass: "dire la commotion de la foule est impossible" (XIV, p. 199). Their laughter applauds the synthetic nature of his disfigurement, and they do not seek to acknowledge that Gwynplaine's fate could have been their own. Their laughter intends to exclude Gwynplaine from humankind, not affirm that he belongs to it.

The laughter of those who scorn Gwynplaine is utterly malign because it is more devoted to death than to human life. In Le Rhin, Hugo observed "rien de plus sinistre que le rire immobile" and Gwynplaine inspires laughter because the grimace on his face does not disappear.[3] The crowds who revel in his flesh delight in the fact that his development has been definitively stopped and Henri Bergson has attested "cesser de changer serait cesser de vivre".[4] This malevolent laughter indicates therefore the deeply regressive nature of human beings, because they instinctively appreciate the eradication of progressive potential. With their joyful screams, the crowds inform Gwynplaine that he may as well be dead, because they are interested only in that part of his being which has no semblance of living, breathing humanity:

> "et la foule, sans cesse renouvelée autour de ce rire fixe, se pâmait d'aise devant l'immobilité sépulcrale du ricanement" (XIV, p. 182).

The laughter of the scornful crowds terrifies the reader because of the complete absence of compassion for a man who has been turned to stone, the antithesis to the frail, mortal flesh of which human beings are made. The adjective "sépulcrale" emphasises that Gwynplaine has been transformed into one of the living dead, and the crowds' amusement indicates their approval of this most negative of metamorphoses.

The irony surrounding the derision of Gwynplaine signifies that this

laughter is particularly malign. It is ironic that the immobility and silence of Gwynplaine's laugh should incite such frenetic movement and sound: "la convulsion d'hilarité soulevée par Gwynplaine" (XIV, p. 200). In the House of Lords, the most exclusive theatre in the realm, the laughter of the aristocrats is as deafening as that of the poor spectators of *Chaos vaincu*. Hugo thus demonstrates that all of the people in the society of L'Homme Qui Rit are greatly amused by the fact that Gwynplaine has been tortured and that he must continually endure the agonies of Prometheus. The clamour of the lords is unremitting: "le rire recommença, cette fois accablant" (XIV, p. 354). Ironically, Gwynplaine is forced to hear the endless revivification of laughter and it indicates to him that his existence as "the laughing man" is fixed. As Gwynplaine's inhuman existence is an evil because it cannot be altered, the laughter of his audiences is malign because it also cannot be discontinued.

Whether audible or inaudible, Gwynplaine's laughter negates his being. The immobile, mute grin on his face incites those who see him to ridicule such monstrosity. The quiescence of oblivion is in the laughter etched on Gwynplaine's face and it is an indication that his existence will constantly be nullified by this apparent expression of joy. *L'homme qui rit*'s fate is to continually suffer in silence, "silence et solitude autour de Gwynplaine" (XIV, p. 188), whilst those who could have expressed horror for him unequivocally vocalise their delight. Moreover, people are prepared to pay for this amusement, so that cruel derision is financially lucrative.

Gwynplaine must inevitably live as the antithesis to himself, "sa face riait, sa pensée non [...] s'il eût pleuré, il eût ri" (XIV, p. 182). "C'est en riant que Gwynplaine faisait rire" (XIV, p. 182) and yet Hugo emphasises "et pourtant il ne riait pas" (XIV, p. 182). *L'homme qui rit*

does not laugh so there is thus the suggestion that the crowds who delight in him also indulge in the antithesis to merriment.

The momentary pleasure of the people, "quand on avait ri, on détournait la tête" (XIV, p. 183), is bought at the expense of one man's condemnation to eternal humiliation and isolation. C.W. Thompson observes that "le rire, non moins que le flot, est sans cesse pour ou contre" and laughter is a negative current that always opposes the individual who selflessly amuses others.[5] Hugo asks the rhetorical question, "seulement, le rire est-il synonyme de la joie?" (XIV, p. 181) but the reply can only be in the negative. "Gwynplaine vivait dans une sorte de décapitation" (XIV, p. 187) because laughter is a means of slow torture and execution in L'Homme Qui Rit. If one accepts a Freudian reading of Hugo, this reference to "décapitation" indicates that laughter not only kills and tortures in L'Homme Qui Rit, but it also emasculates. This must be true because "Gwynplaine, pour une femme, était insupportable à voir et impossible à regarder" (XIV, p. 183). Laughter denies Gwynplaine's humanity and his sexuality and it can be seen to be rigidly opposed to progress, since it has condemned him to perpetual virginity.

Sadistic scorn does not only resound in L'Homme Qui Rit. The most depraved gratification that is signified by laughter is perhaps illustrated in Hugo's final novel. As he precariously enters royalist territory in the fierce midst of battle, the wounded and unarmed Radoub is confronted by the fearsome Chante-en-hiver. The injured revolutionary reacts to this highly dangerous situation by bursting into laughter:

> "Radoub profita de ce répit pour éclater de rire.
> -Dis donc, cria-t-il, Vilain à voir! est-ce que tu crois me faire peur avec ta gueule en boeuf à la mode? Sapristi, comme on t'a délabré le minois! Chante-en-hiver le visait" (XV, p. 461).

Radoub's facetiousness indicates his courage in the face of death, but his

drollery is black humour. His laughter could be interpreted as a Freudian release of his fear, a purpose which laughter also fulfils for the crowds in L'Homme Qui Rit because Gwynplaine "faisait tant peur qu'il faisait rire" (XIV, p. 187). It is interesting to note that Radoub had time to disarm his enemy or to make his escape, but instead "Radoub profita de ce répit pour éclater de rire". Laughter thus appears a strong physical compulsion, that the individual cannot resist even in the most wretched of circumstances. It is not the property of the mind, but of the body only.

Like the *comprachicos'* victims and the Celtic boxers, Chante-en-hiver is belittled because of the injuries he has sustained, but Radoub also berates his lethal potency: "allons, allons, crache ton petit coup de pistolet, mon bonhomme" (XV, p. 461). However, Radoub is punished for mocking the royalist's face by having his own visage mutilated:

> "le coup partit et passa si près de la tête qu'il arracha à Radoub la moitié de l'oreille" (XV, pp. 461-462).

The organ which receives laughter and satirical words is damaged, which suggests once again that it is the sound of laughter that is most intolerable. The consequence of Radoub's laughter is a brutal wound and the proximity of the bullet to his head suggests that Radoub almost paid for his laughter with his life.

Radoub displays indifference to his own existence, after disdaining that of his enemy. His laughter declares contempt for life itself. He revels in this atrocity and brutality seems to be perpetuated by the degenerate satisfaction it provides. As the royalist maims, the revolutionary excruciates: "et il se rua sur Chante-en-hiver,...lui saisit et lui mania sa mâchoire disloquée" (XV, p. 462). The royalist subsequently loses consciousness and Radoub asserts that putting him to death would entertain him further: "je ne vais pas à présent m'amuser à te massacrer" (XV, p. 462). Laughter is here seen to conceal an intent to

murder, which is a more enjoyable distraction still.

Hugo depicts an injured, threatened man who gains pleasure from his opponent's serious wounds, although they are soon to be his own. Radoub does not groan in pain from his pierced shoulder (XV, p. 461), nor does he wince in fear of he who smites him. Chante-en-hiver is the embodiment of the horror of armed conflict, "un oeil crevé, une mâchoire fracassée, un masque sanglant" (XV, p. 461) but Radoub does not gasp in terror when he encounters this bloody vestige of a man. In the catastrophe of civil war, there is no pity for physical suffering nor abhorrence of such violence. Radoub's laughter is disturbing because it suggests the difficulty of bringing war to an end. His laughter indicates that men continue to battle because they derive immense delight from the slow destruction of each other. In the midst of ferocity and devastation, men should scream and cry but instead Hugo shows that they laugh.

War and torture seem entirely uncongenial to laughter and yet these abominations are rich sources of mirth in Hugo's final two novels. Even imminent death provides entertainment.

The association between laughter and death is forcibly established in Les Travailleurs de la Mer. Gilliatt's attempt to sustain his own existence by searching for food appears to be mocked by the death's head that greets him. Clubin's grinning "tête de mort" (XII, p. 746) has the invincible power of the tomb and it seems to ridicule the life of the mortal Gilliatt. The benevolent mariner is thus informed that death is unexpected, near and inescapable. The death's head appears to derive wicked gratification from the alarming knowledge it imparts: "quelque chose riait en effet. C'était une tête de mort" (XII, p. 746). This ribald skull embodies the traditional suggestion that death is inherent in laughter:

> "le côté inquiétant du rire, c'est l'imitation qu'en fait la tête de mort" (XII, p. 746).

The most exuberant noise to resound from human lips is therefore a grim exhalation from the grave. When an individual laughs, Hugo suggests that he expresses the omnipotence of the tomb that will ultimately claim him. Laughter is thus not a celebration of life but of death. Like Clubin, laughter is thus also hypocritical. In his grave, Clubin is not allowed to practise any deception. His remains testify to the horrifying reality of laughter. The laughter on Clubin's skull cannot be heard but it also cannot be hushed; no peace will succeed it. In the underwater grotto, therefore, the mortal hero of Les Travailleurs de la Mer is confronted with an object which will prevail: a mocking death's head. Since the grave reduces every human being to a skull and bones, Clubin's "tête de mort" is particularly alarming. Hugo indicates that the inevitable fate of all of mankind is to demonstrate such derision in the eternity of the tomb.

In L'Homme Qui Rit, laughter does not merely proclaim the might of death. It physically exterminates Gwynplaine and the man who created him. In the perverse cosmos of the later novels, fatal wounds are a source of intense amusement, but laughter actually has the capacity to end life in these works. In the House of Lords, Gwynplaine hears laughter which is much more malicious than any he has heard before and it is literally deadly to him:

> "seulement, à la Green-Box le rire fêtait Gwynplaine, ici il l'exterminait. Tuer, c'est l'effort du ridicule. Le rire des hommes fait quelquefois tout ce qu'il peut pour assassiner" (XIV, p. 352).

Gwynplaine gained fame and wealth in the lowly district of Southwark, but in the most elevated auditorium in the land, he is rewarded with defeat and disconsolateness. In his analysis of the new lord's reception, Guy Robert concludes: "ce qui est normalement l'expression de la joie est devenu

cruauté et homicide".[4] Like the executive powers they wield, the laughter of the lords is lethal.

As C.W. Thompson has said, the lords' vituperation resembles the killing satire of the Ancient Greeks. It testifies that the public entertainer, *l'homme qui rit*, is before them, not a newcomer to their elevated ranks, and, as Barkilphedro has declared, "Gwynplaine est mort" (XIV, p. 281). Gwynplaine was only deceiving himself when he professed "je renais. Je nais!" (XIV, p. 282). Gwynplaine cannot begin a new life or revert to his old existence. Like Cassandra, Gwynplaine is a bringer of truth who is put to death. The oblivious fury of laughter is preferred in L'Homme Qui Rit.

Gwynplaine's demise is alarmingly one of self-destruction, however. Hugo accentuates the materiality of mirth, because against the will of *l'homme qui rit*, laughter echoes from his body in the House of Lords, and it catalyses the scorn of the nobles which annihilates him. Material laughter is an enemy of life, and it will even secure the death of the individual who releases it.

In the incongruous setting of a torture chamber, laughter echoes, and indeed it is the criminal being broken who is particularly jubilant. In *La cave pénale*, Hugo demonstrates the chaotic nature of laughter. People are entertained ceaselessly by *l'homme qui rit*, but his creator is struck down by laughter. Evil, material chaos, employs laughter to do its destructive work. The punishment inflicted upon Hardquanonne almost denies him the physical capacity to laugh, so his desire to express jubilation must be irresistible to him:

> "il tressaillit autant qu'on peut tressaillir quand on a une montagne sur la poitrine,...Et, terrible, il éclata de rire" (XIV, p. 262).

Gwynplaine's grimace is such that it compels even a condemned man who is

racked with pain to burst out laughing. Hardquanonne's mockery of Gwynplaine expresses his delectation in his vivisectional work. In the later novels, laughter is principally sadistic because it involves the derision of the transmogrified flesh of others, but Hardquanonne's defiant bellow shows that laughter can also be masochistic, since some characters in these works laugh at their own mangled flesh.

Gwynplaine is tortured afresh by his manufacturer, a scientist who racks his Frankenstein psychologically after having him maimed physically. Confronted with the embodiment of his culpability, Hardquanonne shows no fear or remorse to Gwynplaine. The criminal who cannot evade death scorns his victim and thus conveys to him that he will never escape derision:

> "maintenant ris à jamais. Et lui-même il se mit à rire" (XIV, p. 268).

Hardquanonne accentuates that he has marked Gwynplaine with indelible laughter by imposing his dying cackle of a curse upon him. The hideous laugh with which Gwynplaine has been visibly scarred by Hardquanonne is vocalised by him and it is directed back at Gwynplaine to humiliate him even more. Hugo remarks that Hardquanonne's second laugh "aurait pu être pris pour un sanglot" (XIV, p. 268) which suggests the indistinctness between laughter and crying. He who should be wailing for his salvation is howling exultantly. This "sanglot" would not be one of pity for Gwynplaine, but one of selfish regret for his own demise.

Hardquanonne's amusement is preceded by that of the reader who laughs at the black humour in the doctor's statement: "il a ri, cela l'a tué" (XIV, p. 269).[7] This euphemism absolves the English legal system for the atrocities it commits in the name of justice but the grave consequences of amusement are nevertheless indicated. Laughter does indeed kill Hardquanonne, because it is the manufacture of *l'homme qui rit* which has sentenced him to death. Laughter is shown to be a particularly ruthless

killer because Hardquanonne has created an endless source of it and yet it destroys him.

So in this underground torture chamber, laughter is depicted as an invincible, devastating force which demands release even if the body containing it must burst with it. I doubt whether laughter has ever been more powerfully portrayed as a form of torture than in this scene.

Incalculable energy is devoted to the ruthless activity of laughing in the later novels. Hugo's delineation of laughter in these works is the inversion of a benign concept because it bears witness to the absence of compassion in mankind. The individual is shown to derive immense satisfaction from grief suffered by others or by himself, so that laughter demonstrates the depravity of human gratification. Physical and moral ruin are actively sought because they provide such intense delight. Laughter is an uncompromising force and often destroys those who animate it most effectively. Gwynplaine's career depicts laughter as undeserved, severe castigation. Like Prometheus, Gwynplaine hoped to bestow "the gift of knowledge" but the only life he is awarded is one of eternal torment.[n] The deadly scavenger which perpetually attacks Gwynplaine is laughter itself.

Dreaming

In this section, I will be endeavouring to prove that even the indolent pastime of dreaming is shown to be malign. I do not have the space to consider the extensive question of the subconscious and the eidetic in these novels, so for the purpose of this thesis I will have to confine myself to the malevolent aspects of dreaming in these works.

In the later novels, those who roar with laughter are powerful and they have the capacity to severely hurt their fellows who amuse them. Dreamers, however, are principally defenceless. In Promontorium Somnii.

Hugo states "l'Homme a besoin du rêve" (XII, p. 471) but man is either unaware that this need inflicts harm upon him or he is too feeble to resist its baneful influence.

The gravity of dreaming is reinforced because it is not a transitory activity. Nightmares are ordinarily dispelled by waking but in the later novels the conscious mind cannot extinguish the horrors of the subconscious. Indeed, dream and reality are inextricable from each other. Like laughing, dreaming is malign but the former depends upon a risible object to incite it. The entertainer is debased by laughter because he can hear its shouts ridiculing him, but an individual can be devastated by dreaming without realising that he is even indulging in the activity. Dreaming is a silent, secret and unexpected foe.

Far from being an insignificance, the dream is a terrible trap that refuses to relinquish some dreamers: "le rêve, éblouissant et épouvantable, se jette sur eux [des songeurs] et les détruit" (Promontorium Somnii, XII, p. 465). The negative representation of dreaming in the later novels continues the themes of Promontorium Somnii, which was written in 1863. In this treatise, dreaming is associated with the obscure side of the moon and with the deep crater that is found there. A dream is not an unsubstantial, fleeting fantasy in Promontorium Somnii; it is concrete and enduring: "ce songe était une terre" (XII, p. 452). The existence of this milieu that lies concealed in the esoteric darkness of the galaxy undermines human certitude:

> "oui, cette chose est. Il semble qu'elle vous regarde.
> Elle vous tient" (XII, p. 454).

The dream is therefore a living being and appears to have more power than the dreamer, the source from which it emanated. Laughter illustrated the evil of matter, but dreaming demonstrates that evil can also operate as a force.

The dreamer is not the master but the subject of his dream, which examines him without his knowledge. The eponymous Promontorium Somnii is a lunar crater, an image marrying the dream to a body that symbolises the perplexing field of the unknown. This black, bottomless cavity seems to beckon to the dreamer to immerse himself in its depths, and dreaming is thus associated with the lethal act of falling into an abyss.

L'Abîme was the original title selected by Hugo for Les Travailleurs de la Mer and it is a potent evocation of the sea and the subconscious. It also reinforces the theme of the malign femininity of chaos in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, since the unfathomable abyss is connected to woman and the sea. The sea inspires Gilliatt to indulge in endless meditation, but its unplumbed waters also indicate that Gilliatt is in mortal danger:

> "tout disparut pour lui dans l'immersion sans fond de la rêverie. Gilliatt avait un abîme, Déruchette.
> Une voix qui l'appelait le tira de cette ombre"
> (XII, p. 604).

Here Gilliatt is rescued from the shadows of his dream, but they ultimately absorb him. Dreams do not brighten the darkness. They enshroud the dreamer. In La Pente de la Rêverie, Hugo had suggested that the idle pastime of daydreaming could be a certain descent towards mortal peril and he continues this idea in Promontorium Somnii and in his later novels.[9] Promontorium Somnii depicts a dream as a vigorous, merciless assailant and this delineation is maintained in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize.

The dream that predominates in the later novels is the nightmare. Marianna Carlson has observed that Hugo is a novelist who chooses to display "une série de visions".[10] The majority of these "visions" are nightmarish in the later novels. The prevalence of nightmare is vividly asserted at the inception of Les Travailleurs de la Mer, with the depiction of *le Roi des Auxcriniers*, who dances in delight at the prospect of a

shipwreck:[11]

> "s'il y a à l'horizon des navires en détresse, blême dans l'ombre, la face éclairée de la lueur d'un vague sourire, l'air fou et terrible, il danse" (XII, p. 563).

Nightmare is infinitely more powerful than human beings. A mere glimpse of this hideous character will cost men their lives: "qui l'a vu fait naufrage entre une Saint-Michel et l'autre" (XII, p. 562). Whilst humans are weak, the malign subconscious is potent and its strength is intensified by the imminent expiry of men. This piscine, ghostly hybrid is perhaps the "King of Nightmares" because his presence is the clarion of destruction, "rien n'est moins rassurant que de l'apercevoir" (XII, p. 563). Moreover, his title indicates that a multitude of "auxcriniers" are vibrant and in active existence. The suffix "criniers" is suggestive of hair; Gwynplaine has a "crinière" (XIV, p. 183) on his head. Living, forceful nightmares are "at the hair", making a violent assault upon the human head. In his diaries, Hugo indicates that they are not willing to relinquish their grip.

The reader of the later novels is confronted with a profusion of nightmares, because many dreams are malign. The "rêves" of the villainous characters do not appear benign. Josiane dreams of giving her virginity to a monster (XIV, p. 144) and Barkilphedro's "rêve" is to dissect his mistress whilst she is still alive (XIV, pp. 166-167). If these sickening terrors are dreams, the reader fearfully contemplates what greater horrors could be nightmares. The dreams of Josiane and Barkilphedro are nauseating but they imply the pre-eminence of nightmare. It has edged out benevolent dreams. All oneiric experiences appear to be virulent.

The most frightening aspect of nightmares is that they impose themselves even upon children, and whilst they are awake. The *déniquoiseaux* flee in terror from the enigmatic voices emanating from Plainmont. This sinister place is a nightmare which confronts these

children. It is a "maison visionnée" (XII, p. 617), an expression suggesting that Plainmont either is the site of nightmarish apparitions or that it is itself the product of a malicious subconscious, a "maison" which has been "visionnée". The *déniquoiseaux* come into collision with the world of nightmare and it succeeds in intimidating them. There is a certain degree of black humour in the boys' fear, because they run from the conversations of smugglers, not from the conspiracies of ghosts.

However, there is no humour when the barefoot, abandoned Gwynplaine encounters the realm of nightmare in the frozen landscape of Portland. The hanged man, "l'habitant de la nuit" (XIV, p. 65), personifies nightmare. His existence is as shadowy as that of a dream: "il n'y était pas" (XIV, p. 65). This dark, vacillating figure assails the solitary child. Hugo indicates that such an attack could be experienced by any unsuspecting person:

> "si l'on passe en certains lieux et devant certains objets, on ne peut faire autrement que de s'arrêter en proie aux songes, et de laisser son esprit s'avancer là dedans" (XIV, p. 65).

The hanged man strikes intense terror in the boy Gwynplaine because he does not have any mature powers of cognition. An adult would recognise the gallows as a gruesome reality, but the child is more affrighted. He believes that the unreal has come to pursue him: "pour un homme c'eût été un gibet, pour l'enfant c'était une apparition" (XIV, p. 66). Hugo emphasises that this eerie vision does not exist, "l'enfant voyait ce rêve" (XIV, p. 69) but it threatens the boy spectator, whose tangibility seems to have been evaporated by his association with nightmare: "les yeux fermés, presque fantôme lui-même, il prit la fuite" (XIV, p. 69). The flight of the boy is as frightening as his collision with the apparition, however. Fleeing from a nightmare gives the sensation of an endless and desperate retreat, and Gwynplaine dashes "éperdu" (XIV, p. 69): "il courait avec

l'angoisse et la difficulté du songe" (XIV, p. 69).

In the later novels, dreaming is far from a passage to a tranquil haven for troubled individuals. Reverie does not only provide Lethierry or Michelle Fléchard with even momentary relief from their distress. Instead of distracting them from their individual losses, dreaming convinces them that their very identities have been taken from them. "Songer à décroître" (XII, p. 763) leads Lethierry to believe that "tout est fini. On est ruiné. C'est bon, on est mort. Point. On est vivant" (XII, p. 763). Dreaming obliges Lethierry to recognise that he is forced to continue existing although his reason for living has been snatched away from him. Lethierry is locked in interminable misery. The machinations of his subconscious merely sustain the workings of his conscious mind: "il passait ses nuits à rêver, et ses jours à songer" (XII, p. 758). Similarly, in Quatrevingt-Treize, dreaming notifies Michelle Fléchard that she is leading a meaningless life: "elle peut être mère, et voilà tout. Chaque jour, elle s'enfonçait davantage dans sa rêverie" (XV, p. 415).

Dreaming perpetuates the work of the criminals who have dispossessed Lethierry and Michelle Fléchard. Rather than relieve them of their burden, their dreams torment them and awaken in them the desire for death.

Dreaming intensifies the anxiety of Michelle Fléchard and Lethierry but it afflicts a more forlorn character still. Daydreaming makes Gauvain acutely aware of his privations, but his regret is more pronounced. "Il était sur l'échafaud, rêveur" (XV, p. 508) and this occupation seems a desperate attempt to escape a gruesome reality. Whether he dreams of the past or the future, however, Gauvain will reflect sorrowfully upon the life that he has been denied. Lethierry and Michelle Fléchard were informed of their metaphorical demise by their dreams, but Gauvain is reminded that his physical expiry is certain.

Hugo emphasises that those who are most in need of succour are aggrieved more intensely by their dreams, which bring death ever nearer to their victims, rather than distancing them even momentarily from it. Through the medium of the subconscious, death appears to seize hold of condemned men before they are executed. Dreams are the allies of torturers and executioners. Rather than providing a compassionate escape, a dream can be the epitome of merciless condemnation.

The virulence of dreams is accentuated because they are not fleeting distractions but persistent sources of harrassment. Dreams are often a scourge, attacking the already debilitated. After being physically hurt by Lantenac and his soldiers, Michelle Fléchard is wounded by her intransigent dreams, "une rêverie opiniâtre" (XV, p. 413), but these injuries are not visible:

> "-eh bien, nous sommes debout, nous n'avons plus de plaie.
> -Qu'au coeur, dit-elle" (XV, p. 413).

Dreaming is capable of inflicting more irremediable damage than any bullet, as the chapter title 'Sein guéri, coeur saignant' (XV, p. 413) demonstrates. The descendant of Ursus, Tellmarch, "un peu médecin, un peu chirurgien et un peu sorcier" (XV, p. 413), heals Michelle's gunshot wound but he has no remedy for the incessant harm inflicted by her dreams. He is obliged to allow her to wander. In the later novels, the languorous daydream can be tenacious and it seems determined to destroy the daydreamer.

Michelle Fléchard is not the only character to be weakened by "une rêverie opiniâtre". Gilliatt's experiences indicate that it is the dream, and not the dreamer, which is in command. It is suggested that Gilliatt suffers from hallucinations: "peut-être y avait-il en Gilliatt de l'halluciné" (XII, p. 569) but these visions do not appear to be the result of a psychological malfunction within him. Like a ghostly apparition which

restlessly pursues its arbitrary victim, "l'hallucination hante" (XII, p. 569) so that this dream endured by Gilliatt appears to be supernatural, and the subconscious mind becomes indistinct from the tomb. Gilliatt is the prey of hallucinations which Hugo asserts are not illusory. They belong to another reality which is beyond man's control or comprehension:

> "les mystérieuses rencontres avec l'invraisemblable que, pour nous tirer d'affaire, nous appelons hallucinations, sont dans la nature" (XII, p. 745).

Hugo erodes the barriers between illusion and reality with his assertion that living beings are "hallucinations". Moreover, these palpable creatures are intent upon menacing the unsuspecting human, like their fellow fiends, the elements. The dreamer is not liberated or soothed, but persecuted.

Besides the psychological vexation it causes, dreaming can inflict unforeseen physical harm. At the beginning of Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Hugo indicates that Gilliatt's preoccupations with the sea and with Déruchette could canker his being: "en de certains lieux,...regarder la mer est un poison. C'est comme, quelquefois, regarder une femme" (XII, p. 571). When he daydreams, Gilliatt is therefore taking in toxic substances that are slowly ruining his body. It is perhaps because Gilliatt is already obsessed and impaired by the sea and the subconscious that Déruchette is able to further weaken his conscious existence. Poison is a substance which must usually be ingested into the body, like the lethal amounts of arsenic swallowed by Emma Bovary, but it is merely the sight of the sea and of Déruchette which is noxious to Gilliatt. There is thus here the old idea of the eye functioning as the gateway to indiscriminate evil sights which infiltrate and then infect the brain. Like heroin, the object of desire is destructive to the addict, but it becomes essential to living. Hugo interjects "on s'accoutume au poison" (XII, p. 599), and the

impersonal "on" indicates that all dreamers, and not only Gilliatt, become inured to the injuries inflicted by their dream. They are the slaves of their addiction and any other existence than narcosis is impossible.

Like Gilliatt, Gwynplaine is subjugated by his dreams of a woman, dreams which are irresistible but which nevertheless have a malign power: "la rêverie attire, enjôle, leurre, enlace, puis fait de vous son complice" (XIV, p. 231). This image suggests that the dreamer is enslaved and will suffer the humiliation of contributing to his own downfall. Gwynplaine also suffers from the "empoisonnement" (XIV, p. 231) of his persistent dreaming about Josiane. Seemingly innocuous dreams contain deadly toxins: "on peut s'empoisonner avec des rêveries comme avec des fleurs" (XIV, p. 231). Gwynplaine is committing an act of self-destruction by allowing the "idée vénéneuse" (XIV, p. 231) of Josiane to permeate his brain: "suicide enivrant, exquis et sinistre" (XIV, p. 231).

Gilliatt and Gwynplaine are victims of the habit of dreaming and the image of poison suggests the protracted and agonising death suffered by them. Satire kills instantly, but dreaming is a tardier executioner.

The dreamer unknowingly exposes himself to scrutinisation by prying, alien eyes. In Les Travailleurs de la Mer, "le rêve est l'aquarium de la nuit" (XII, p. 570) and it sustains "ces animalités étranges,...ces lividités terribles ou souriantes, ces larves,...ces hydres, ces obscures décompositions du prodige" (XII, p. 570). A dreamer brings to life a gruesome menagerie of the ancient ("hydres") and the embryonic ("larves"), the cadaverous ("décompositions") and the vigorous ("lividités"). The mature grisliness of these larvae can only be imagined, but they indubitably become stronger from their interaction with the human dreamer. These are the fauna "composée de nous-mêmes et d'autre chose" (XII, p. 570). The dreamer does not only animate this myriad of abominations. He

provides them with the opportunity to closely examine him. Every mortal who sleeps suffers the indignity of having no protection or privacy. The conscious mind would shield itself from so many foul and curious eyes but the dreamer is laid bare. A dream is not a dazzling or comforting spectacle but an active invader. Once again, the dream is more powerful than the dreamer. To his horror, the reader learns that when he dreams he suffers the *lex talionis* of an observer who is observed.

It was no doubt during his nightly inspections of this gruesome aquarium that Gilliatt initially perceived the "hydre" that was *la pieuvre*. In her "palais de la Mort" (XII, p. 692), Gilliatt "reconnut la pieuvre" (XII, p. 739). It is not until the flaccid mass performs the function of viewing "ces yeux voyaient Gilliatt" (XII, p. 739) that he recognises the monster of his sleeping mind. The proximity between the octopus and the hero is such that the roles of the spectator and the spectated are indistinct from one another. The dreamer and his dream become interchangeable, and in *la pieuvre*, Hugo encapsulates all the sadistic tortures which a virulent subçonscious could bring to bear down upon the conscious mind. Is it possible that behind the transparent screen of "l'aquarium de la nuit" the hydra-octopus selected Gilliatt to be her victim? Do the "animalités étranges" stalk the dreamer when they watch him in order to obliterate their creator? The dreamer is unaware that his apparently inconsequential slumbering breathes life into monsters.

In L'Homme Qui Rit, an unreal being examines Gwynplaine, with the intention of obliterating him. "*Chaos vaincu* était plutôt un songe qu'une pièce,...un effet de vision" (XIV, p. 228) but when Josiane is present in the auditorium, "l'effet de vision revenait sur eux" (XIV, p. 228). Hugo dissolves the boundary between the illusory and the actual and those who are ordinarily watched view the "chimère" (XIV, p. 228) looking at them:

"cette femme les regardait, et ils la regardaient" (XIV, p. 228). The players' examination of this "vision" does not lead them to any deeper understanding of it, however. The female spectator appears no more real than "une hallucination" (XIV, p. 228) and yet she has a bloodthirsty interest: "les fantômes gras, qu'on nomme les vampires, existent" (XIV, p. 229). Those on stage or their female observer could be the stuff of fancy, but her very presence is supernatural and deadly.

The vampiric dream that is Josiane launches a virulent and relentless attack upon Gwynplaine: "à son insu, la profonde gravure de la rêverie avait mordu très avant" (XIV, p. 240). Impalpable dream acquires sharp teeth which embed themselves in their prey without him being aware of the assault. "Un certain mal était fait" (XIV, p. 240) is a euphemism for this aggression. A vampire's bite is incurable. Moreover, not only was Gwynplaine incapable of appreciating the injury to him but he joyfully embraces his invader, exacerbating his own demise: "en toute cette rêverie, désormais peut-être irréparable, il la reprenait avec emportement" (XIV, p. 240). In Corleone-Lodge, Josiane inflicts the harm upon Gwynplaine's body that her image has been inflicting on his mind: "et elle le mordit d'un baiser" (XIV, p. 317).

Witnessing fanciful visions places Gilliatt and Gwynplaine in severe danger. Hugo indicates that dreams are to be feared because their murderous intent is real and they have the capacity to extract the life and the soul of the dreamer, who participates in his own annihilation.

Besides being physically aggressive towards him, a dream renders an individual more insecure because it obliges him to question his human faculty of cognition. A dreamer does not know whether he is asleep or awake, so that reverie plunges him into an impenetrable fog of confusion. In the later novels, oneiric power reigns and human intellect and potency

are made to lie prostrate before it. Not being able to distinguish between what is real and what is unreal is highly alarming.

Hugo's fusion of dream and reality has been thoughtfully considered by Dr. A.R.W. James.[12] In his article, 'Le Songe et le réel', Dr. James refers to the lines:

> "Une forêt pour toi, c'est un monde hideux,
> Le songe et le réel s'y mêlent tous les deux" (A Albert Dürer. Les Voix Intérieures).

In the later novels, the murkiness between dream and reality has intensified. It is found everywhere, and not only in the forest.

Dreams are distinguished by their visual expression and the qualities of the latter enable the human brain to define a situation as actuality or illusion. In The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud elaborates upon G.T. Fechner's work on the functioning of the dreamer's brain: "he suspects, rather, that the scene of action of dreams is different from that of waking, ideational life".[13] In the later novels, however, "the scene of action of dreams" is entirely indistinguishable from "waking, ideational life". In *la cave pénale*, Gwynplaine is trapped in the intermingling of these mental states and he is completely unable to separate them. In Southwark gaol, dream strikes Gwynplaine: "un homme à qui il vient de tomber sur la tête une tuile du palais des rêves, c'était là Gwynplaine" (XIV, p. 267). The injury to the head, the manufacturer of dreams, seems to be a punishment against it for the creative energies of its conscious and subconscious. Dreams have innate, malevolent dynamism. It is as if Gwynplaine is made to suffer concussion, and that this pain intensifies the turmoil of being told that he is not the lowly player, *l'homme qui rit*, but an English lord. Gwynplaine is confused and then hit, and dream succeeds in destabilising him psychologically and physically.

Gwynplaine's consciousness belies the seemingly unconscious realm in

which he is immersed. The scene in which he is forced to participate is so frightening that Gwynplaine is convinced it must be unreal and he yearns to be free of it: "ah ça, cria Gwynplaine, réveillez-moi!" (XIV, p. 269). Barkilphedro obeys the new lord, "oui, dit-il, je viens vous réveiller" (XIV, p. 270) but Gwynplaine receives no satisfaction from the fulfilment of his wish. He discovers that 'waking' is merely an outsider's differentiation between dream and consciousness: "depuis vingt-cinq ans, vous dormez. Vous faites un songe" (XIV, p. 270). Barkilphedro is like an evil fairy, literally granting Gwynplaine's wish, "réveillez-moi", when he truly desired to be returned to all that was familiar to him. Moreover, Gwynplaine hoped for an end to his confusion, but he is even more perplexed by the asseveration that the only identity he has ever had, like a transient dream, has ceased to exist. Gwynplaine learns that there is no escape from this unpleasant dream. He is trapped indefinitely within the nightmarish experience of living a reality that is defined as an illusion.

As Professor Thompson has already demonstrated, the later novels, and in particular L'Homme Qui Rit, compare with La Vida es Sueño, written by Calderon in the early 1630s.[14] Barkilphedro's wakening of Gwynplaine recalls Basilio's plan for his son Segismundo:

> "...and later be returned to jail, he can
> Believe he dreamed it all" (Act II, Scene 1).[15]

There are many similarities between Calderon's "awakened sleeper" and Gwynplaine.[16] Both characters have a bestial nature. Gwynplaine is leonine, with his "crinière" and his ancestral home of Corleone-Lodge, whilst Segismundo protests that he is "a wild/Beast among men" (Act I, Scene 2). Hugo's hero is told that "Gwynplaine est mort" and Segismundo asserts that he is "a dead man who's alive" (Act I, Scene 2). The confusion between dream and reality thus catalyses the erosion of other fundamental barriers. The wide-awake dreamers of La Vida es Sueño and

L'Homme Qui Rit are neither entirely human or wholly alive. They demonstrate that humans are open to the dominant, malign power of dreaming, as they are open to evil itself. Dream eradicates the humanity and the very existence of Gwynplaine and Segismundo.

Southwark gaol and the *Douvres* are both places of transformation and sites of transition where the heroes' ability to distinguish between consciousness and unconsciousness is snatched away from them. The real and the unreal are perhaps at their most inscrutable in the later novels on this isolated reef in the midst of the Channel waters. The name of this hostile reef to which Gilliatt is bound is imbued with confusion, reinforcing the inseparability of dream and reality. The phonetic association between *Douvres* and the verb "douter" establishes these rocks as a place of incertitude, mingling the real and the unreal. The language employed in the evocation of Gilliatt's labours emphasises the indefiniteness of the reality of the *Douvres*. The section 'Gilliatt le Malin' proliferates with similes and innumerable idioms signifying tentative states of being, either directly, "c'était presque quelqu'un" (XII, p. 702), or by simile, "cette acceptation ressemblait à l'hospitalité d'une gueule ouverte" (XII, p. 703), or by choice of term, "comme un cachot qui monterait autour d'un homme" (XII, p. 703). The *rochers Douvres* are an indefinite place quivering between the concrete and the imaginary, and they terrify Gilliatt. Their unreality threatens to absorb his existent life.

If he is to win Déruchette, Gilliatt must remain on the *Douvres* until he has freed the *Durande*'s engine. To realise his rosier dream, therefore, Gilliatt is persistently forced to harbour nightmarish doubts about the actuality of his existence.

On Guernsey, as "l'homme du songe" (XII, p. 569), Gilliatt voluntarily submits himself to the disorientation of dreaming, but on the *Douvres* he

finds that in the reality surrounding him he sees all the quality of a dream:

> "tout ce milieu où il était offrait l'extraordinaire de la vision; Gilliatt avait de la chimère autour de lui. Le demi-étonnement de la nuit s'y ajoutant, il se voyait plongé dans l'impossible. Il se disait: Je rêve" (XII, p. 684).

"Le demi-étonnement" evokes the incompleteness in which Gilliatt finds himself and it is an alarming, fragmented state of the solid and the unsubstantial. The abstract expressions "l'extraordinaire" and "l'impossible" accentuate that dreaming plunges the brain into disquieting uncertainty. Gilliatt cannot differentiate between the memorised home of which he dreams, or the spectacular seascape before his eyes: "tant qu'il dormait, il croyait veiller et vivre; quand il réveillait, il croyait dormir. En effet, il était désormais dans un songe" (XII, p. 684). Whether open or closed, Gilliatt's eyes identify the same phenomenon, "le rêve", and the omnipresence of this product of sleep and the night confounds logic. Gilliatt is in a position of extreme insecurity. The power of reasoning, which enables human beings to make the most fundamental of judgments has crumbled before the might of malevolent dream, so that Gilliatt's position is highly unstable. Hugo's interjection, "en effet, il était désormais dans un songe" indicates that the *Douvres* have succeeded in eroding the reality of Gilliatt's existence. The hero of Les Travailleurs de la Mer has become no more than the imaginary prisoner of a chimerical environment.

The only human inhabitant of the *Douvres* is mentally and physically diminished by them, and as his stay becomes more prolonged, he is given no respite from the destructive power of this dreamscape. "Dans un songe", Gilliatt is almost ingested into the dream that is *la pieuvre*: "ce rêve est sur vous" (XII, p. 742). Hubert Juin has observed that the sea is the abode of "les êtres du cauchemar, ainsi la pieuvre".[17] Since "rêve" is

unequivocally a euphemism for this ordeal, could the "songe" which confines Gilliatt also be truly a "cauchemar"? After imprisoning him, the nightmare of the *Douvres* attempts to slay Gilliatt.

Departing from the terrifying realm of the *Douvres* does not restore security to Gilliatt, however. The *Bravées* seem no more definite to him than the *Douvres* were:

> "la lune lui montrait ce rêve...Il lui semblait voir un paradis fantôme. Il avait peur que tout cela ne s'envolât" (XII, p. 766).

Gilliatt's superhuman feats may as well have been a flight of his imagination. He continues to perceive marriage to Déruchette as a fanciful whim and not as an imminent reality: "il pensait à l'inaccessible qui était endormi,...il pensait à la femme impossible assoupie, et visitée, elle aussi, par les chimères" (XII, p. 766). Unlike his beloved, Gilliatt is not merely visited by "les chimères". He has been captured by them and beneath the lights in Lethierry's living room he appears to have been transformed into one of them: "Gilliatt était hideux" (XII, p. 775). The marks of the nightmare which attacked him are still visible:

> "quelques-unes des pustules de la pieuvre étaient encore visibles sur les bras velus" (XII, p. 775).

Déruchette faints at the gruesome sight of her future husband and her unconsciousness prefigures Gilliatt's return to the obliviousness of the sea.

After being in contact with the nightmare on the *Douvres*, Gilliatt cannot return to the reality of Guernsey. He has ceased to belong to it. Marianna Carlson has remarked that, at the end of his trials, Gilliatt "n'appartient plus au commun des mortels" but I would qualify this assertion.[10] Gilliatt becomes so dominated by dreams that he ceases to belong to the ordinary world of the "conscients" and the "éveillés". In Gilliatt's case, dreaming ultimately deprives him of his existence.

The inability to distinguish between the conscious and the unconscious is not only experienced by the two heroes Gwynplaine and Gilliatt. Dream is the reality of a meaningless, protracted existence for the inconsolable Lethierry:

> "on a beau être en chair et en os, on ne se sent plus réel; on n'est plus pour soi-même qu'un songe" (XII, p. 656).

The impersonal "on" evokes the disconnection between the dream and the self that Lethierry endures, but it also alarmingly suggests that this fragmented condition can be the sufferance of all mankind. Dreaming causes cognitive impairment, but the inability to ascertain nullity and actuality is not as important as the oneiric event and the human experience of it. During Gilliatt's encounter with Clubin's skull, Hugo interjects "illusions ou réalités, des visions passent" (XII, p. 745). It is not the existent or illusory nature of visions that is significant, but their very happening. Such apparent "hallucinations" are autonomous, "des visions passent", and unsuspecting humans are obliged to witness them: "qui se trouve là les voit" (XII, p. 745).

The dreamer in the later novels is not merely an involuntary witness but a sufferer. In Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Hugo expounds that "le penseur veut, le songeur subit" (XII, p. 567). Gilliatt, "l'homme du songe", is depicted not as an idle spectator, but as a man who undergoes anguish because of the visions he sees. Similarly, in L'Homme Qui Rit, Gwynplaine's oneiric encounter with Josiane in Corleone-Lodge results in affliction which subjugates him: "il ne pensait pas. Il ne songeait même plus. Il subissait" (XIV, p. 320). Gilliatt and Gwynplaine do not dream like Jacob.[19] They are made to endure like Job. Dreams disappear, but the suffering they produce remains.

Dream is an autonomous, destructive force in the later novels. Its negative delineation demonstrates that even when the individual is most

inactive and believes that he is indulging in the most insignificant of activities, he is inflicting untold harm upon himself. "Le monde du cauchemar, qui est le monde inverse, est toujours présent" and the characters of the later novels are caught within a vertiginous, mortifying whirlwind in which their reality and their nightmares are only dreams.[20]

In a forbidding piece of didacticism of the late 1850s, Hugo's fear of dreaming is unequivocal:

> "Le philosophe (sorcier) s'écria:
> ...Veillez!
> Malheur à qui s'endort. Nul ne sommeille sans rêver. L'alcôve est l'antre des spectres. Tous les songes viennent de l'abîme. Plus le sommeil est profond, plus il est à la merci du cauchemar... Tremblez, vous qui vous endormez!"[21]

The command "Veillez!" is as impossible as it is universal. The human being can only tremble at the nightly torments that he will certainly endure. Hugo's conviction in the malignity of the subconscious was complete. Hugo was very afraid of madness, and that he might also lose his sanity, as his brother and his daughter had. His warning to avoid dreaming is the frightening indication that madness is very near and indeed that we are all in contact with it when we sleep.

"L'enfer, le serpent et la rêverie s'enroulent sur eux-mêmes" (XIV, p. 368) is perhaps the most telling and alarming representation of dreaming in the later novels. This sentence severs dreaming from any positive or innocuous connotations. Dreaming seems diametrically opposed to the two diabolic images, yet the three entities writhe around each other with familiar ease. Dreams, like the snake, are the creatures of hell. "La rêverie" appears to be the serpent's invisible, impalpable sibling. Dreams are therefore the work of the Devil. This delineation of dreams recalls and magnifies the Aristotelian conception of dreams:

> "that dreams are not sent by the gods and are not of a divine character, but that they are 'daemonic', since nature is 'daemonic' and not divine".[22]

However, in Hugo's later novels, dreams are not merely "daemonic". They have become vigorous demons. The association between reverie and the inferno indicates that the former leads to a place where there is no escape from agony.

Conclusion

The negative delineation of laughter and dreaming shows the extent to which malevolence is hidden but vibrant in human existence. Language used by humans is shown to be duplicitous: these activities appear to be benign concepts, but they are no more than masks concealing the operations of evil. The inversion of benign concepts also expands the identity of the victim. The later novels show that people can be involved in the apparently innocuous pursuits of dreaming and laughter against their will and without their knowledge. Moreover, they can endure immense harm because of them. Far from being the most joyous sound to emerge from the mouth of men, Hugo shows that laughter is a grievous weapon which human beings use to torture and kill their fellows who are already afflicted. In a *note préalable* to L'Homme Qui Rit, Hugo remarked "humain, dans de certains cas, signifie inhumain" and laughter vividly illustrates this fervent desire to be inhuman.[23] In Chapter Two, in my examination of metamorphosis, I considered the energies that were consciously and maliciously employed by men and by the cosmos. In this chapter, I have shown that evil dominates the universe of the later novels to such an extent that it is present even in the leisure of men and in their less conscious moments. Evil is an omnipresence for the characters of the later novels.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. Châtiments, III, II (Club Français du Livre, VIII, p. 631).

2. Châtiments, VII, IX, Vers I: "...Peuple, pas même lui!" (Club Français du Livre, VIII, p. 755).

3. Le Rhin, Lettre XXVIII, Club Français du Livre VI, p. 434.

4. Le Rire, P.U.F., Paris, 1962, p. 24.

5. 'Du rire romantique à l'espace éclaté: *L'Homme Qui Rit* et *Le Coeur du Pitre* de Rimbaud', RHLF, 1991, no: 2, pp. 223-224.

6. *Chaos vaincu*: Quelques remarques sur l'oeuvre de Victor Hugo, Belles Lettres, Paris, 1976, p. 243.

7. This episode in L'Homme Qui Rit forcefully recalls the poem 'L'Homme a ri', in Châtiments.

8. Adrian Room, Room's Classical Dictionary, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1983, p. 264. When Gwynplaine envisages his maiden speech in the House of Lords, there are evocations of Prometheus: "il leur apparaîtra comme le porte-flambeau, car il leur montrera la vérité" (XIV, p. 285).

9. In Le Temps de la Contemplation, Jean Gaudon cites a passage from La Pente de la Rêverie and considers the cautions made against reverie:

> "Amis, ne creusez pas vos chères rêveries;
> Ne fouillez pas le sol de vos plaines fleuries;
> Et quand s'offre à vos yeux un océan qui dort,
> Nagez à la surface ou jouez sur le bord;
> Car la pensée est sombre! Une pente insensible
> Va du monde réel à la sphère invisible;
> La spirale est profonde, et quand on y descend,
> Sans cesse se prolonge et va s'élargissant,
> Et pour avoir touché quelque énigme fatale,
> De ce voyage obscur souvent on revient pâle!

La spirale, image autant que Babel privilégiée, au confluent du glissement "insensible" de la pente et du creusement de l'abîme insondable, donne à cet océan hugolien sa vraie signification: celle d'une surface trompeuse recélant une profondeur secrète à laquelle le contemplateur ne résistera pas." (Le Temps de la Contemplation, p. 51.)

10. 'L'Art du romancier dans Les Travailleurs de la Mer', Lettres Modernes, Numéro 38, Paris, April 1961, p. 19.

11. See note 124 in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, Garnier Flammarion, Paris, 1980, p. 616.

12. I am deeply indebted to Dr. James for directing me to the work of the Marquis Hervey de Saint Denys. His text, Les Rêves et les Moyens de les Diriger, Claude Tchou, Paris, 1964, was a most enlightening aid to my study of dreaming in Hugo's later novels.

13. The Interpretation of Dreams, The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Translated by James Strachey, Hogarth Press, London, 1974, Volume I, p. 48.

14. See 'A Propos des lecteurs anglais de *L'Homme Qui Rit*: sources et ressources de Victor Hugo', L'Homme Qui Rit ou la Parole-Monstre de Victor Hugo, SEDES, Paris, 1985, pp. 123-140.

15. Life is a Dream, La Vida es Sueño, Calderon, Barron's, New York, 1958. Translation and Introduction by William E. Colford.

16. William Colford's introduction to Life is a Dream.

17. Lectures du Dix-neuvième Siècle, Union Générale d'Editions, Paris, 1976, p. 260.

18. 'L'Art du romancier dans Les Travailleurs de la Mer', Lettres Modernes, Numéro 38, Paris, April 1961, p. 42.

19. Hugo refers to the dream of Jacob in Ce que dit la Bouche d'Ombre and in Promontorium Somnii (XII, p. 456).

20. Lectures du Dix-neuvième Siècle, Union Générale d'Editions, Paris, 1976, p. 293.

21. Manuscrit 24 798, *Tas de pierres - Plans et projets (Extraits)*, fo. 224, 149/227, vers 1858, Océan, Oeuvres Complètes de Victor Hugo, 16 volumes, Robert Laffont, Paris, 1989, p. 501.

22. The Interpretation of Dreams, The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Translated by James Strachey, Hogarth Press, London, 1974, Volume I, p. 2.

23. 'Sur les bouffons et la société', (XIV, p. 395).

Chapter Five - The Mouth of Chaos

Thus far in this thesis, I have attempted to demonstrate the extent to which evil in the later novels is shown to dominate the human will and all of the dynamics in the cosmos. In this concluding chapter, I am going to focus upon the malevolent oral images and their relationship to chaos, in an endeavour to sum up the essential nature of Hugo's concept of evil. It will come as no surprise that the later novels depict highly voracious mouths, in men, in beasts and in the cosmos.[1] The mouth and its functions are a constant, salient feature of Hugo's work. As early as 1831 Quasimodo's oral physiology establishes the mouth as a site of chaos, violence and confinement. His teeth are "désordonnées" and "ébréchées" (IV, p. 53) as if they had suffered some blows. But Hugo also compares his teeth to "les créneaux d'une forteresse" (IV, p. 53), suggesting strength, and hints at hidden forces contained within its perimeters. The desire to break into or out of this imprisoning defence is also implied. Quasimodo's mouth is depicted as a source of furious energies and this delineation is maintained in the later novels.

In Les Misérables, men seem to have implanted pestiferous mouths and intestines in the urban milieu that they have built for themselves: "par moments, cet estomac de la civilisation digérait mal, le cloaque refluait dans le gosier de la ville, et Paris avait l'arrière-goût de sa fange" (XI, p. 878). And in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize, oral virulence is even more evident in humans, in the environment they create, such as the "bouche d'antre" of Southwark gaol (XIV, p. 251), in beasts and in the cosmos.[2] The land and sea are pitted with cavities and traps, hungry mouths that promise miserable ends for all those who fall into them. Even the wind is awarded terrifying physical substance in the later novels: "impossible de bâillonner cette bouche, le vent" (XII, p. 751). A gust of wind thus resembles a bite more than an

exhalation and the vast jaws of the wind, the sea and the night give their true significance to the voracious mouths of men. That is hardly the positive message given famously by *la Bouche d'Ombre*:

> "Le mal expirera; [...] un ange
> Criera: Commencement!" (IX, p. 389).

And in these later novels, there is no such ironic juxtaposition between the blackness of cosmic mouths and the light they produce. Absolutely nothing positive emerges from the "bouches d'ombre" of Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit or Quatrevingt-Treize: they are obscure and they generate and perpetrate evil.

In Hugo, as in some primitive myths and in Rabelais, who is cited in L'Archipel de la Manche (XII, p. 526), the mouth is related to chaos mainly because of its position and functions within the body. If it is an opening which leads inexorably downwards, it also expels liquefied material risen from the lungs and the intestines and is a naturally occurring treacherous pitfall. The mouth indicates destruction from which there is no escape, because all matter which is ingested into it is pulverised by the teeth and liquefied by saliva and the stomach continues this relentless process of disintegration, until the digested matter is expelled through the anus, which, like the mouth, is another bodily opening.[3] The mouth is closely associated with the stomach, since they are both elastic receptacles and the mouth feeds the hidden, larger space of the stomach which endlessly demands to be filled. As such, the mouth and the stomach are not dissimilar to the uterus, which can also be seen to possess an insatiable appetite in the Hugolian consciousness. Moreover, the vagina, the entrance to the uterus, is synonymous with the mouth and the anus in these works, because Hugo makes little distinction between them. Since the mouth is a place which is responsible for interminable, negative transformation and one which conceals indistinct, disintegrating matter, its relation to chaos

is quite clear. However, its association with the uterus and the vagina reinforces the connection between the female and chaos. In the later novels, as I will shortly demonstrate, Hugo depicts his heroes being digested in the stomachs of female monsters. Chaos is female by definition in these works and it is always evil.

Of course, in Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo, Charles Baudouin has already perceived the interest of these oral images, and their association with the female body in Hugo's works. What Baudouin did not appreciate, however, was that Hugo was conscious of the use he was making of this material. Besides depicting chaos in the stomach of females and in the uterus of "la mer", Hugo also makes extradiegetic comments which suggest that woman can specifically be defined as iniquity itself:

> "si femme signifie faute, comme je ne sais plus quel concile l'a affirmé, jamais la femme n'a plus été femme qu'en ces temps-là" (XIV, p. 147).

One can assume that Hugo was deliberately choosing to exploit the traditional association of chaos and evil with femininity. Moreover, it is not inconceivable that he would be inclined towards making this connection in the later novels, because during their composition he was abandoned by his wife and his daughter and he remained very dependent on prostitutes to satisfy his sexual needs, despite his advance in years.

As I indicated in the introduction to this thesis, Hugo's appreciation of evil is an intensely physical one, involving an indivisible, oppressive mass which subsumes all that it meets. The individual's experience of evil is being forced to recognise that he is regarded as no more than an insignificant amount of matter, and being forced to merge with amorphousness. Hugo's depiction of the Mouth suggests the anguish and debasement of such a reduction of the human and that instant, painless effacement is rarely granted.

The Hugolian Mouth is not empty. Teeth feature prominently and their sharpness implies the brutality that is inflicted when one body determines to integrate another. The individual is gradually deprived of his being, and only after the piercing and pulverisation of his flesh. Those who are menaced by teeth and jaws are made aware that their existence is utterly disdained."[4]

The importance of the mouth in sustaining a body is suggestive of ingestion into a chaos that is alive. The mouth renders all of its contents indistinct from one another and the intestines compound this disintegration. The mouth is therefore an entrance into chaos and its very nature is one of confusion, because it is capable of regurgitating the material that it has ingested. In short, evil involves being absorbed into ignominy, which is why this chapter is so relevant to this thesis.

Eating is not the only malevolent oral function represented in the later novels. The mouth is principally malign because it appertains to matter, and "le mal, c'est la matière." However, there are many evil forces which issue from the mouth. Much damage in the later novels is done by laughter and speech. The intellectual capacity of speaking should distinguish man from all other species, but in the later novels, words that are enounced are often malicious, so that the human mouth is no more benevolent than its dumb, bestial, rapacious equivalent. Virulent oral functions can be considered to originate in matter, because the mouth releases them from their imprisonment within the body.

The alliance between chaos and the mouth in Hugo's later novels compares with an ancient concept which indicates that the two entities are inextricable from one another:

> "Chaos...does not really mean 'empty space', and still less the 'confusion' that it means to us today. It means more 'to yawn', 'to gape', 'open wide', *chaino*".[5]

To the ancient Greeks, primordial confusion was thus represented by an open mouth. Even the seemingly benign action of yawning can be seen to indicate the presence of primeval chaos, and together with shouting and laughing, can be seen to emit it.

In the first part of this chapter, I intend to examine the depiction of oral functions in the later novels and then I will consider the significance of the chaos to which the mouth leads.

The Malevolence of the Mouth

In Hugo's later novels, the mouth is predominantly a theatre of ferocious sound and action. Fierce acts, such as devouring, occur within it, but it is also the vehicle for furious currents. When jaws part, the mouth can disseminate evil throughout the universe. A closed mouth is treacherous because it conceals evil, which an open mouth will activate. The exterior appears to be gravely threatened by the diverse malevolent functions of the mouth. Moreover, the mouth is seeking victims to engulf into its interior.

Human oral aggression

The aggressiveness of this arena of violence is primarily indicated by the teeth, which are perhaps the most salient feature of the oral images in these works. They are the mouth's weapons of assault. They respond to the bidding of the stomach and they demonstrate the damage that must be done to sustain life, by tearing and grinding food. The stomach is hidden, but it is responsible for the devastation that is done by the highly visible teeth. The inner potential to inflict ruin is therefore signified by the outer, solid projections. The teeth are sinister even when they are immobile. They are the concretisation of the desire to devour and their constant presence within the mouth suggests that this yearning is permanent and the appetite insatiable.

Teeth represent extreme egotism and inclemency: they assert their intention to keep themselves alive by destroying all other life that they encounter.[6] All the oral functions that reveal teeth therefore comprise the truculence that they embody. In the previous chapter, I posited that laughter is predominantly pessimistic in the later novels because Hugo associates it with death (XII, p. 507). However, laughter also has more immediate and tangible negativity. A face that roars with laughter bares all of its teeth, so that its apparent display of joy is in reality a declaration of bitter enmity. Indeed, teeth and their hostility are essential to laughter:

"les dents sont nécessaires au rire" (XIV, p. 183).[7]

The *comprachicos* were fully aware of this indispensability. Although they stripped Gwynplaine of most of his face, they exposed his teeth, "*genzivis denudatis*" (XIV, p. 128), but they did not seek to deprive him of them. Showing his teeth so visibly, Gwynplaine has the countenance of "Gwyn... mangeur d'enfants" of Les Travailleurs de la Mer (XII, p. 527). Ironically, however, Gwynplaine is a laughing man who displays his teeth, but he has endured savagery to reveal them.

Peals of laughter can humiliate those who hear them, but the sight of laughter can be more adverse still. Those who perceive a laughing visage are confronted by teeth which are eager to consume them. The role played by teeth in laughter indicates the deceitfulness of the human condition. Men who laugh only ostensibly express joy, and as Hobbes asserted that men revel in the pain of others, Hugo shows that in reality those who laugh thirst for the destruction of their fellows. The hostility of laughter that is signified by the teeth implies that man has not advanced: he remains an animal.

Predatory mouths are visible in men, beasts and in the man-made and

cosmic environments. All of them long to taste human blood. To Barkilphedro, behaving like a carnivorous reptile is a requisite to his existence: "pourvu qu'il eût une proie sous la dent, ou dans l'âme une certitude de mal faire, rien ne lui manquait" (XIV, p. 162). Perpetrating evil is here specifically defined as preying upon others. The two protruding teeth which distinguish the "profil" (XIV, p. 163) of Barkilphedro encapsulate his character. "Un moi féroce" (XIV, p. 162), Barkilphedro's capacity for devastation is immense and the protuberance of his teeth suggests their keen anticipation to inflict physical harm: "nuire, c'est jouir" (XIV, p. 161). Moreover, Barkilphedro has concluded "mordre plaît" (XIV, p. 164). The failure of Barkilphedro's mouth to contain its teeth suggests the inability of his "très gros ventre" (XIV, p. 160) to assuage its appetite for destruction. He does not select prey for his incisors. Such is their anxiousness to pierce flesh that they hunt their own: "ces dents avaient l'air de vous regarder" (XIV, p. 163). Barkilphedro's thirst for blood thus appears to be physical, not intellectual. The pronoun "vous" impels the reader to imagine himself as the prey of Barkilphedro.

To be menaced by this character with cannibalistic desires is to fear being viciously dismantled by him.[7] However, Barkilphedro is also serpentine, one of "ces êtres...vénéneux" (XIV, p. 162), so that his teeth intend to sever, grind and inject poison into his prey. He determines to utterly obliterate his victims. They are psychologically diminished, because they become the food of a beast. Physically, they are destroyed and the very substance of their being becomes tainted by him. Barkilphedro's teeth seem to wish to bury themselves into the very heart of his victims and violate their souls.

Hugo does not confine such determined oral ferocity to the evil

strategist of L'Homme Qui Rit. In his delineation of Barkilphedro, Hugo remarks "les dents regardent, de même que l'oeil mord" (XIV, p. 163) which suggests that the human head and therefore human thought can be interested in nothing but self-advancement by means of the obliteration of others. All men can thus possess this sanguinary egotism. It is alarming to consider that to be the object of someone's gaze is to have been chosen for destruction. The eyes do not always function as receptors of information: they can also impart hatred and can physically wound.

Oral aggression dominates the entire physiognomy of human predators. Their only aim is to hunt and kill. Indeed, the sanguinary ruthlessness within men that is indicated by their teeth endures longer than their mortal bodies. Skulls retain their teeth, "la tête de mort les garde" (XIV, p. 183), and their inherent ferocity. The appetite for destruction is therefore as vibrant in the grave as in the world of the living. Hugo seems to suggest that there is perpetual hostility in the grave, not eternal peace.

Beasts

Bestial predaciousness is of course exemplified by *la pieuvre*. Teeth suggest the horror of having one's own flesh invaded by an alien body which penetrates deeply and tenaciously. Animality invariably suggests a mouth filled with teeth and yet as it has often been pointed out, *la pieuvre* is toothless. A mouth without teeth appears defenceless but *la pieuvre*'s mode of devouring displays the protracted and agonising death that must be endured inside a mouth without teeth or jaws. Teeth frighten those who see them, but those who are ensnared by this female eater of men do not have time to experience fear of her. To see *la pieuvre* is to be swallowed by her:

> "elle n'a pas d'approche, ce qui est terrible. Presque toujours, quand on la voit, on est pris".[7]

Teeth warn of an imminent attack, but *la pieuvre* represents engulfment of the most unforeseen kind.

La pieuvre is vampiric, a "suceur de sang" (XII, p. 741), but she has no fangs to extract the object of her lust or to instantly end the life of her victims. Gilliatt is absorbed into a mouth which is not satisfied with suffocating its prey; it intends to burst his skin to drink his blood. Gilliatt is trapped in the nightmare of being relentlessly compressed by alien flesh, which strives to explode his own. When Gilliatt strikes down his foe, she is made to resemble one of the oral weapons that she does not possess: "il arracha la tête comme on arrache une dent" (XII, p. 745). *La pieuvre*'s desire to devour is concretised. In his reduction of her, Gilliatt thus asserts the ruthlessly voracious disposition of this "hypocrite" (XII, p. 741).

The devouring done by man-made structures

Predaciousness is so dominant in the people of Quatrevingt-Treize that its spirit is shown to have permeated the structures that they have built. Although the *ancien régime* has been swept away by the Revolution, its bastions can still aggress those who oppose it. The *ancien régime* is of masculine gender and it was presided over by the male Bourbon kings, but the stronghold that represents it is given the female gender by Hugo in Quatrevingt-Treize. *La Tourgue* defies Gauvain's soldiers to enter her gaping mouth, and her vast dimensions suggest her immense capacity for the destruction of revolutionaries:

> "les assaillants avaient devant eux ce porche noir,
> bouche de gouffre ayant pour mâchoires, en bas et
> en haut, toutes les pierres de la muraille
> déchiquetée; une gueule de requin n'a pas plus de
> dents que cet arrachement effroyable" (XV, pp. 458-459).

It is inside this "bouche de gouffre" that Hugo chooses to stage "les boucheries" (XV, p. 459) of this siege. The echo of "bouche" in

"boucherie" accentuates that the mouth is a place for slaughter.

The revolutionaries are made aware that their royalist enemies are not the only living beings whom they oppose: "on eût dit que c'était la tour elle-même qui saignait et que la géante était blessée" (XV, p. 459). Gauvain's men thus enter the dying body of a female and it might incorporate them definitively when it expires.

It is the ordeal of Jonah which confronts Gauvain's men, the impossible feat of surviving consumption by an alien: "il fallait entrer dans ce trou et en sortir" (XV, p. 459). Like Jonah, the revolutionaries are responsible for presenting themselves with this terror. This "bouche de gouffre" resembles Gwynplaine's mouth. It is a product of violence, an "arrachement effroyable". This opening in the medieval tower has been made by a revolutionary mine (XV, p. 458), which intended to damage the fortification, but instead it has invested ferocious vitality into it.

At the end of Quatrevingt-Treize, the *ancien régime* has been brought to an end, but savagery has not. Indeed, the champions of progress commit self-defeating violent acts, and the *ancien régime* is still vigorously eradicating its enemies, with the aid of the female which embodies it. What is more remarkable and terrifying, however, is that the post-feudal new age also has its female exponent of oral brutality. Unlike her mother *la Tourgue*, ("et la guillotine avait le droit de dire au donjon:- Je suis ta fille" XV, p. 376), the *guillotine*'s capacity for slaughter is endless. The triumph of the modern era is the improvement of the efficacity of oral destruction. *La Tourgue* had breakable, stone teeth, but the *guillotine* has one impermeable incisor. Historical eras may change their political complexions, but their preoccupation with the brutal, mass consumption of their enemies does not. What also does not change is the femininity of the oppressors who do the work of these savage *régimes*, so that violent

absorption into a chaotic stomach can be seen to be particularly associated with the female in Hugo's later novels.

Cosmic devouring

Although Gilliatt succeeds in depriving *la pieuvre* of her capacity to devour, he cannot perform the same operation on her mother "Ceto" (XII, p. 723) the sea: "impossible d'édenter cette gueule, la mer" (XII, p. 751). Gilliatt is ultimately consumed by the colossal beast that has consistently preyed upon him but he will not appease her appetite. He does not prevent the destruction of others; his death is a meaningless sacrifice.

The sea is shown to be capable of diverse oral malevolence. In Quatrevingt-Treize, the sea displays the treachery of Judas, kissing the vessel it has conspired to wreck:

> "de grosses vagues venaient baiser les plaies béantes
> de la corvette, baisers redoutables" (XV, p. 306).

These kisses are not intended to give succour: the sea is expressing her delight in the harm she has caused. Female passion for mutilation recalls the eighteenth century noblewomen in L'Homme Qui Rit who kissed freshly severed heads (XIV, p. 146). These are the "baisers redoutables" of a female vampire. She will devour this object of her affection. By embracing with her partially closed mouth, the sea imparts her impatience to part her jaws fully and engulf her victim.

The sea's oral malevolence always results in absorption. The metaphor "cette gueule, la mer" (XII, p. 751) implies that all those unfortunate enough to fall into the sea are in danger of becoming its food. The mouth of the sea has a far greater capacity than that of even Rabelais' Gargantua, so that countless men are menaced with being consumed by the deep.[10]

The sea does not only use rocks as fierce teeth. The waves which created them also sever the sea's victims: "l'eau est pleine de griffes.

Le vent mord, le flot dévore; la vague est une mâchoire" (XII, p. 673). The very fluid which constitutes the sea is thus awarded trenchant properties. Buoyant liquid does not keep ships afloat; they are jostled between infinite rows of teeth. Vessels are surrounded by gigantic implements which bite and claw at them. The mariners in Melville's Moby Dick are mortally threatened by the whale they pursue, but their counterparts in Hugo's later novels are caught in the jaws of a beast. The very act of sailing is perilous in these works. Degrading, agonising obliteration appears inescapable. Clubin must not only suffer the humiliation of being eaten, but also bitterly appreciate that he has served his own body up as a meal for the sea: "Clubin frissonna. Il s'était mis lui-même dans la gueule de l'ombre" (XII, p. 652).

The depiction of the sea's oral hostility is magnified in L'Homme Qui Rit. "Les crachats de la houle" (XIV, p. 89) forcefully express the sea's disdain for the *Matutina* and its passengers. The *comprachicos* seem to have entered a mouth which finds them utterly distasteful and which is striving to eject them into the vast mouth of the sea:

> "le pont avait les convulsions d'un diaphragme qui cherche à vomir. On eût dit qu'il faisait effort pour rejeter les naufragés" (XIV, p. 92).

Besides pulverising them on its jagged rocks, the sea appears to be imposing a greater degradation on the *comprachicos*. It seems to be determined to dissolve them in repugnant, bodily exudations, because of the reference to "crachats" and nausea. Geestemunde informs his colleagues that God has granted them "la tombe qui lave" (XIV, p. 104) but God does not appear to be present in the voracious cosmos. The waters of the sea do not appear to have any interest in purifying the *comprachicos'* souls. They are interested only in the destruction of their bodies, and the erosion of their flesh into foul fluid.

The all-encompassing jaws which are beneath the *Matutina* are duplicated in the sky above it. "Une menace de gueule entr'ouverte, étrangement inexorable" (XIV, p. 89) hangs over the *comprachicos*, who are thus made to realise that they cannot escape being consumed by the cosmos. Even an intangible cloud has gnawing teeth, impatiently seeking to enfold the ship into its fetid mass and fatally infect the humans on board its decks: "le nuage plein de souffles traînant sa tumeur sur l'océan, rétrécissait et rongeait de plus en plus la mer autour de l'ourque" (XIV, p. 89).[11]

The sea engulfs the *comprachicos*, but the earth across which their child victim stumbles also threatens to swallow him. As his kidnappers had found themselves between "deux précipices" (XIV, p. 105), Gwynplaine finds himself "entre les deux gueules du gouffre" (XIV, p. 111). Gwynplaine has been abandoned on the particularly hostile terrain of Portland:

> "on y trouve encore...le trapp sortant des bancs de conglomérat comme la dent de la gencive" (XIV, p. 109).

This simile implies that Gwynplaine is in the clutches of a huge predator. Gwynplaine "était sur la terre ferme" (XIV, p. 111) and yet the ground upon which he walks is as unstable as the deep: "la roche est glissante, la grève est mouvante" (XIV, p. 110). Moreover, although he is not at sea, Gwynplaine appears to be in peril of being reduced to the victual of a terrifying marine glutton:

> "partout...des entre-bâillements dentelés comme la mâchoire multicuspide d'un requin..." (XIV, p. 110)

A shark's teeth are always on display and his mouth is always open, so that Hugo emphasises the land's appetite for destruction. The absorption which threatens Gwynplaine is more horrifying than that which menaces his molesters, because it is so unexpected. In L'Homme Qui Rit, the ground offers men no sanctuary from the hungry mouths of the sky and the sea.

Indeed, the earth is pitted with multiple orifices which yearn to feed on even the smallest of those who walk upon it.

In Hugo's later novels, mouths are not empty hollows, so being swallowed is not a simple or a swift process. Ingestion is only an initial misery; it is the teeth which slowly erode existence. Those with protruding teeth and voracious mouths seem to resent any other life but their own. They regard human beings only in terms of matter which can be expended to advance their own ends. Oral aggression implies that hatred, materiality and egotism are the major preoccupations of the universe. Predaciousness suggests that humanity is repudiated in favour of bestiality and that this regression provides considerable gratification.

Unlike the mouths of men and beasts, the mouths of the sea and the sky have no perimeters. Moreover, these vast mouths are not all gaping voids. Hugo attributes fierce vitality to the universe because its orifices are filled with teeth. The cosmos appears to harbour a ruthless, insatiable appetite for rendering diminutive humans less significant still by pulverising them brutally. All life is threatened, since the earth appears to be gripped between the restless jaws of the cosmos, and the earth itself has many mouths which seek to feast upon men. Oral aggression is particularly exhibited by females in the cosmos and it suggests that to be human is to be coveted for destruction by the huge, invincible global beast which continually seeks to feed the chaos of her stomach.

Speaking

Devouring is a destructive spectacle that is staged in the mouth, but there are many, negative forces which emerge from within the body and escape through the mouth. In Les Travailleurs de la Mer, the winds "ont le chaos" (XII, p. 720) and the currents of air which are exhaled by the mouth can be seen to be their equivalents in the human and bestial realms.[12] I now

intend to demonstrate that speaking often directly perpetrates evil and that yawning and screaming also both assert the might of chaos.

Like the bestial action of devouring, the human intellectual capacity of speech is shown to have the ability to devastate in L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize. Much of the speech in Les Travailleurs de la Mer is malicious. Words from the mouths of the English powerful and powerless are shown to condemn, to greater and lesser degrees. Hugo refers to women in the seventeenth century who were sentenced to burn at the stake by the arbitrary opinions of James I (XII, p. 562). With their adverse talk of him, Guernsey people condemn Gilliatt to a life of isolation: "l'opinion n'était pas bien fixée sur le compte de Gilliatt" (XII, p. 565).

In the novels succeeding Les Travailleurs de la Mer, however, the balefulness of the spoken word has increased considerably. The deadly influence of speech is not confined to the defunct, nor to the ascendant, nor to England. In L'Homme Qui Rit, Basque children are dreadfully aware that their lives can be ended by one enunciation from their mothers' lips:

> "on parle encore à l'heure qu'il est des comprachicos à Oyarzun, à Urbistondo, à Leso, à Astigarraga. *Aguarda te, nino, que voy a llamar al comprachicos!* est dans ce pays-là le cri d'intimidation des mères aux enfants" (XIV, p. 50).

Gilliatt is a maligned orphan, but these women threaten to have their own children destroyed. Their willingness to utter these forbidding words suggests their indifference to the lives of their children. These infants will subsequently live in fear of seeing their mothers open their mouths.

Hugo infers that no progress has been made in the Stuart society of England in L'Homme Qui Rit. James I spoke before he condemned a woman, but killing has become a means of oral communication in the late Stuart era:

> "Kirke, un autre jour, fit comprendre à une ville qu'il la savait républicaine en pendant dix-neuf bourgeois" (XIV, pp. 139-140).

James II "avait su choisir Jeffrys et Kirke" (XIV, p. 140), so that seeing

a man hanged was to hear a proclamation by this king. The Stuart method of enlightening the people was execution, and the facility of speaking suggests that lives were readily and excessively expended. Speaking and annihilating are closely linked in L'Homme Qui Rit. It is interesting to note in this novel that those with and without influence utilise lethal speech, and that this capacity is widespread. It is remarkable that those who speak murderous words are adults in protective roles: "à ces sévérités protectrices, on reconnaît le père de l'état" (XIV, p. 139). Those who should defend abuse their authority, and they profane the faculty of speaking to do so.

Hugo shows that monarchs strike arbitrarily with their utterances. It was James II who demanded that Lord Clancharlie's son should be made to disappear (XIV, p. 265) and it was also "par ordre du roi" that the criminals who made him disappear were outlawed. It is Gwynplaine in particular who endures the deadliness of speaking. James II required Fermain Clancharlie to vanish and Barkilphedro's declaration ends the life of Gwynplaine: "Gwynplaine est mort" (XIV, p. 281).

There is a further sinister dimension to the malevolence of speech in L'Homme Qui Rit. The spoken word can destroy those who hear it but also those who vocalise it:

> "il y a une règle pour les grands, ne rien faire; et une règle pour les petits, ne rien dire. Le pauvre n'a qu'un ami, le silence" (XIV, p. 221).

To the lowly, silence is therefore more beneficial than money, nourishment or shelter. It is the only shield of the subject against the punitive monarchy. Ursus is made to talk by the authorities, to whom his status as a speaking 'Bear' with a dumb 'Man' is a serious challenge. Ursus insists that the individual can inflict grave harm upon himself merely by opening his mouth. He desperately instructs Gwynplaine to remain quiescent, like

the embodiment of the grave who arrests him: "sur ta vie, ne parle pas avant qu'on t'interroge!" (XIV, p. 246). In L'Homme Qui Rit, to stay silent is thus to remain alive, even if only temporarily. Speaking can be the ability to kill, or to kill oneself.

In Quatrevingt-Treize, murderous speech remains a significant theme, and it is vividly illustrated. At the beginning of the novel, Hugo indicates that the declamations of the government in Paris result in the deaths of their fellow citizens in the provinces:

> "la section du Bon-Conseil avait proposé d'envoyer des bataillons de volontaires en Vendée; [...] A la fin de mai, sur les douze mille partis de Paris, huit mille étaient morts" (XV, p. 288).

It is ironic that "la section du Bon-Conseil" formulated this command but it is representative of the perverse logic that prevailed during the Terror of Quatrevingt-Treize. Discourse that produces slaughter is considered good.

Additionally in Quatrevingt-Treize, there is the suggestion that words which have malevolent connotations are made more baleful if they are transmitted orally. In his monition to the enemy advancing on *la Tourgue*, l'Imânus declares that he is the means of communication by which Lantenac expresses himself:

> "je suis la bouche par où passent ses paroles" (XV, p. 427).

By reducing himself to a mouth, l'Imânus affirms that he is an instrument of destruction without a conscience. Moreover, this mouth has an inveterate thirst for blood, "j'ai exterminé beaucoup des vôtres" (XV, p. 427) and an appetite for the destruction of revolutionaries that cannot be satiated: "j'en tuerai encore plus que je n'en ai tué" (XV, p. 427). For revolutionaries, hearing Lantenac speak is thus synonymous with being devoured by l'Imânus. Lantenac demands that silence must be the only response to his oratory:

"il ne fallait pas lui répliquer. Il disait: *Si une moitié de vous se révoltait, je la ferais fusiller par l'autre, et je défendrais la place avec le reste*" (XV, p. 433).

Lantenac and l'Imânus thus form a most sanguinary alliance that is prepared to destroy its own men. The determination to kill in the former is ruthlessly expressed by his subaltern. As in L'Homme Qui Rit, devastation has supplanted speaking.

To conclude his final novel, Hugo employs an image that emphatically suggests the murderous power of speech. The flow of blood issuing from Cimourdain's mouth indicates that the political rhetoric that he has voiced throughout his life has resulted in real destruction for many, including his adoptive son and subsequently himself:

"un flot de sang lui sortit de la bouche, il tomba mort" (XV, p. 509). Cimourdain condemned himself when he passed sentence of death upon his *protégé*. Hugo explained that Cimourdain had made himself the mouth of the republic, not of the French people, and it was a voice which denied the humanity to which he belonged (XV, p. 499).[13] In death, Cimourdain's body affirms the malignity of discourse that Cimourdain would not acknowledge whilst he was still living. It could be argued that this gushing mouth is more potent than the concluding image of the novel:

"et ces deux âmes, soeurs tragiques, s'envolèrent ensemble" (XV, p. 509).

It is true that Hugo ends upon a scene of unity, but it is an intangibility created by death. The "flot de sang" from Cimourdain's mouth recalls Robespierre's failed attempt at suicide, when he injured the very organ which enabled him to deliver his speeches in the *Convention*. At the end of his final novel, Hugo seemed to wish to emphasise that political orators can be the most heedless and destructive of all speakers. A river of blood is spilled by Cimourdain's mouth and he too is engulfed by it.

By associating death and the faculty of speech, Hugo indicates that

human beings have been endowed with a ready ability to end life. Speech is often only used to inform of imminent destruction: victims can simply be those who listen. Speaking mouths can be profoundly chaotic, because they are capable of their own eradication.

The possession of speech is a fundamental feature of humanity and yet Hugo shows that it is sometimes prudent for humans to be mute like inferior beasts. The intellectual capacity of speaking apparently promotes the human mouth above all others, but Hugo indicates that this ability is more instantly destructive than bestial devouring.

Yawning

Devouring results in absorption and speaking is a deadly current that the mouth emits at will. I would now like to examine yawning and screaming, which invoke the wide and protracted opening of the mouth.

As I have already explained in the introduction to this chapter, the ancients defined chaos as a gaping mouth. After she has been shot, the open mouth of Michelle Fléchard can be seen at once to depict and convey astonishment at the chaos of the Terror: "Tellmarch examina l'autre. C'était une paysanne. Elle était blême et béante" (XV, p. 336). In shooting Michelle Fléchard, the royalists have attempted to kill an unarmed mother devoted to nurturing the future generation. They appear to have stifled her scream. Moreover, they spare her children only to threaten to burn them alive.

Yawning and screaming fully display the obscure chaos that their mouths contain and indeed they can release chaos from the confinement in which it is held. The oral expression of boredom or fear in the later novels can thus be the acknowledgement of the existence of chaos, or the liberation of it.

It is apt that in L'Homme Qui Rit, the novel in which the mouth of the

eponymous hero has been brutally violated, oral malevolence is such that even the apparently innocuous and involuntary act of yawning has sinister significances. This function of the mouth is seen both as an expression of physical and emotional weariness and is performed by humans, their environment and the cosmos. Half-open mouths are also threatening because they indicate that engulfment by a fully open mouth is imminent: "quand la porte sombre s'entre-bâille, croire est difficile, ne pas croire est impossible" (XIV, pp. 104-105).

In L'Homme Qui Rit, Hugo states that yawning and laughter are the "deux convulsions de la bouche" that are "communicatives" (XIV, p. 182). Apparently insignificant yawning is therefore like hostile, murderous laughter. Moreover, the term "convulsions" suggests that the mouth suffers from an uncontrollable illness.

Since a yawning mouth gapes, it can inspire fear, because aggressive teeth are visible and the desire to devour is suggested. However, yawning does not involve the teeth directly, so the terror of being pulverised is not predominant. Yawning ends with a swift intake of breath, and those who are menaced by it are in danger of being rapidly swept down into the mouth, never again to emerge. Teeth are concrete fiends, but a yawn is an unexpected, intangible and devastating current.

After being abandoned by the *comprachicos*, Gwynplaine watches the *Matutina* put out to sea. He ends his reflection upon his sudden 'solitude' with a yawn:

> "l'enfant était dans un désert, entre des profondeurs où il voyait monter la nuit et des profondeurs où il entendait gronder les vagues.
> Il étira ses petits bras maigres et bâilla" (XIV, p. 60).

This reflex action appears to be no more than a small boy's expression of his weariness with the utter and undeserved hostility that everywhere confronts him: "il ne savait rien, sinon que ceux qui étaient venus avec

lui au bord de cette mer s'en étaient allés sans lui. Il se sentit mis hors de la vie" (XIV, p. 60). Gwynplaine's gaping mouth delineates the chaos he perceives in the cosmos and that he appreciates intellectually. There is external indistinctness: the "profondeurs" beneath him are no different to those above him. His yawning mouth is a microcosm of these dark depths. Internally, Gwynplaine experiences the confusion of recognising that he has only ever known the unknown:

> "ajoutons, chose étrange à énoncer, que ces hommes,
> les seuls qu'il connût, lui étaient inconnus" (XIV, p. 60).

Since yawning is an involuntary action, chaos can be seen compelling Gwynplaine to disclose it. The exterior of his mouth is also chaotic, appearing to laugh when he does not. Chaos dominates Gwynplaine from without and within.

The drowning of the *comprachicos* indicates that Gwynplaine's yawn has darker import. The child's affirmation of chaos precedes that made by the cosmos. The *comprachicos* are not simply absorbed by the sea; they are drawn into an impenetrable, cosmic yawn:

> "ce n'était plus la gueule béante du flot, la double
> mâchoire du coup de vent et du coup de mer, méchamment
> menaçante, le rictus de la trombe, l'appétit écumant
> de la houle; c'était sous ces misérables on ne sait
> quel bâillement noir de l'infini" (XIV, p. 103).

The *comprachicos* are thus not the victims of the insatiable appetite of the elements. Gwynplaine's yawn seems to have made an appeal to the cosmos, which is inspired to evince its overwhelming weariness with these criminals. By manifesting its exhaustion, the cosmos signifies to the *comprachicos* that their time upon the earth is spent. Yawning conveys physical fatigue, but neither Gwynplaine nor the cosmos lapse into unconsciousness. It is the *comprachicos* who are made to fall into oblivion. Hugo makes a connection in L'Homme Qui Rit between sleep and death: "dans la main du sommeil il y a le doigt de la mort" (XIV, p. 67).

The *Matutina*, whose name ironically suggests 'the morning', is not absorbed by sleep but by death.[14]

Yawning is to "open the mouth and inhale", so the *comprachicos* are dragged inexorably down.[15] Their leader contains a suggestion of the mouth in his Germanic name, Geestemunde.[16] He has officiated over the mutilation of Gwynplaine's mouth and he now submits his followers to the gaping jaws of the cosmos.

As it possessed the yawning child, chaos presides over the universe, and, compliant with its erratic nature, it reclaims those who have done its work. As a gaping mouth, yawning is the absolute representation of chaos, and this apparently innocuous act is a grave threat, because it is an activation of chaos also. When chaos compels the jaws of the universe to yawn, it demands to be replenished. Yawning silently and surreptitiously extends the empire of chaos.

The association between Gwynplaine's yawn and "le bâillement" of the infinite implies that justice was being done by the cosmos. It is as if the child determined the manner in which his molesters would die. However, as I have already suggested, yawning perfectly depicts chaos and it does not fail to do its bidding. Throughout his life, Gwynplaine is menaced by yawning mouths. After the *comprachicos* are absorbed into the darkest of yawns, their child victim is threatened by the "entre-bâillements" (XIV, p. 110) of the Portland cliffs. In Corleone-Lodge, the gaping mouth of the female 'Satan' informs her unannounced visitor that he is in peril: "puis elle s'étira et bâilla comme une tigresse au soleil levant" (XIV, p. 313). Previously in London, Gwynplaine seemed to have been inhaled by the yawning doors of Southwark gaol:

"une prison, cela ne s'ouvre pas, cela bâille" (XIV, p. 298).

The gaping mouth of the prison is particularly sinister. Hugo suggests the

gaol yawns "d'ennui, peut-être" (XIV, p. 298), but since "le seuil de la prison" resembles the "seuil de la tombe" (XIV, p. 251), there is the implication that gaols must have killed countless numbers of their captives to have grown weary of incarcerating men.

Yawning mouths assert the power of chaos and like his aggressors, Gwynplaine cannot evade absorption. When he yawned as the abandoned waif in the barren landscape, Gwynplaine was forced to physically demonstrate the chaos that had been displayed on his face, and that would eventually consume him.

Far from being an insignificant action indicating weakness, yawning is a highly effective functioning of chaos in the later novels. Yawning mouths threaten instant and eternal absorption.

Screaming

Like yawning, screaming displays a gaping mouth which signifies chaos, but it is less subtle. Screaming is the stentorian and regretful acknowledgement of chaos, since it is invariably the involuntary expression of fear. Humans, animals and the cosmos all scream in the later novels. Human speech seems to have been supplanted by the unintelligible and the guttural, whilst beasts appear to have acquired some means to communicate.

Yawning reveals inner chaos, but screaming fulfils the irrepressible need of an individual to broadcast his fear. In the later novels, it is the terror of the vibrant presence of chaos that most often provokes screaming.

Piercing cries are prevalent sounds in the universe of Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize. Those who cannot speak nevertheless communicate with their screeches, but they communicate hostility only. The shrill calls of "l'essaim de goëlands et

de mouettes" (XII, p. 684) inform Gilliatt of the vindictiveness of nature and seem to warn of further, harsh reprisals in the future. The screeches testify to the rancour of chaos, which insists upon relentless feuding: "on s'entre-dévore" (XII, p. 636).

Although they cannot devour him, their cries infer their gratification in gorgeing the provisions intended to sustain him. The gulls' chorus expresses their united opposition to Gilliatt, who at the same time is made aware that he is entirely alone in an antagonistic world. The seabirds impart the disdain within nature for Gilliatt. Since their cries are reputed to be the laments of sailors lost at sea, they appear to foretell of Gilliatt's drowning.

In L'Homme Qui Rit, the hanged man has been deprived of his ability to speak, but he has retained the capacity to scream. Although his mouth has been stopped, Stuart England has not silenced him definitively: "un reste de cri semblait bruire dans la bouche ouverte" (XIV, p. 66). The mouth of the cadaver hangs open, testament to the chaos of the monarchy that preserves life after extinguishing it: "on tenait à le conserver mort" (XIV, p. 67). This vestige of humanity is "un reste terrible", "de la nature" and "de la société" (XIV, p. 64), and "un reste de cri" lingers in his mouth. He appears to have been screaming since his sentence was passed and he has not yet refrained from doing so.

This figure is rotting and defunct, but he is still innately human: "les dents étaient demeurées humaines, elles avaient conservé le rire" (XIV, p. 66). The amusement of the hanged man is alarming because he appears to be laughing at the child before him. This corpse is chaotic in nature, an indistinct mass of flesh and putrefaction, and he possesses an exemplary chaotic mouth. Its gape embodies chaos. The injurious force of laughter emanates from it, but it also seems to suggest some masochistic

enjoyment of agony.

However, the man who was hanged long ago and who has become accustomed to many horrifying indignities, is still screaming, which implies that his fear has not yet faded. The chaotic mouth of the hanged man affirms that depraved laughter, terror and chaos endure.

Le pendu emits another scream which is even more alarming. To warn Gwynplaine (XIV, p. 68) and save him from death, the corpse causes another cry to issue from the gibbet:

"ce fut de la secousse. La chaîne qui grinçait, cria" (XIV, p. 68).

The chain is responsible for the prolonged ordeal of the hanged man. It prevents him from falling to earth, but the scream he forces from it results in further torture for him:

> "il sembla que ce cri était entendu. Si c'était un appel, il fut obéi. Du fond de l'horizon, un grand bruit accourut.
> C'était un bruit d'ailes" (XIV, p. 68).

This scream is a plea for destruction. "Ce spectre était là au pillage" (XIV, p. 64) and he begs the scavengers to perpetuate his devastation in order to maintain the life of the little boy. "Cette meute de becs" (XIV, p. 69) tearing at this "enchaîné" (XIV, p. 69) is evocative of the plight of Prometheus, but the hanged man shrieks before his attack.[17] This scream conveys fear for the life of another, and activates chaos, as the repetition of sound suggests: "c'était un tournoiement dans un tourbillon" (XIV, p. 69).

In the manuscript of L'Homme Qui Rit, it is profoundly sinister that this chaotic event is not accompanied by the picture of one of its antagonists. Hugo etched a crow with a pointed beak and hooked talons, but it is not to be found in 'La Bataille entre la Mort et le Nuit'.[18] It is surprising and alarming to discover this scavenger later than expected, in the margin of 'L'Ourque en Mer'. After consuming the hanged man, he

appears to lie in wait for the *comprachicos*. His futile ravaging of dead flesh appears not to have satisfied him, and he anticipates the taste of the blood of the living.

The self-sacrificing scream of *le pendu*, an individual who could speak, has implications later in the life of the child it redeemed. In the House of Lords, Gwynplaine's identification of himself is reminiscent of the screaming hanged man:

"le genre humain est une bouche, et j'en suis le cri" (XIV, p. 349). Critics have referred to this oral imagery, employed by the hero with a deformed mouth, but it is not sufficiently accentuated that Gwynplaine declares himself the scream, and not the voice, of the people. Gwynplaine's mouth has been physically suppressed, brutalised and mutilated and the human race can be understood to have similarly suffered, because of the association Gwynplaine makes between them: "ce qu'on m'a fait, on l'a fait au genre humain" (XIV, p. 354). The battered mouth of humanity has produced an equally forbidding expression in Gwynplaine.

Screaming is indicative of the debasement of communication between men. Their anguish seems so intolerable that their desire to verbally express themselves to their fellows appears to have disappeared. Only the spontaneous, transient and unintelligible utterance is transmitted. Gwynplaine asserts "moi, je ne suis rien, qu'une voix" (XIV, p. 349) and he is the visual representation of a strident yell acknowledging fear.

Ironically, before his maiden speech, Gwynplaine exclaimed "on m'a démuselé" (XIV, p. 306). His noble audience perceive only the sub-human in him:

> "Lord Vaughan, homme sentencieux,...s'écriait:-Nous revoici au temps où les animaux péroraient. Au milieu des bouches humaines, une mâchoire bestiale a la parole" (XIV, p. 352).

'En ruine', Gwynplaine bitterly reflects that "sa parole avait paru plus

difforme que sa figure" (XIV, p. 365). With hubris, Gwynplaine insisted "vous m'entendrez" (XIV, p. 349), but the lords refused to hear anything other than a rude, unintelligible noise to correspond with the monstrous individual projecting it.

Gwynplaine receives as positive a response to his "cri" as that made to the scream of *le pendu*. Gwynplaine was convinced that veracity would spring forth from his wounded mouth:

> "grâce à moi, on comprendra. Je serai la bouche sanglante dont le bâillon est arraché" (XIV, p. 364).

Gwynplaine intended a positive force to emerge from his mouth, but it is swept away by the murderous current of laughter from the lords. He is only injured further by the unbinding of his mouth. Chaos is released by it.

Like the hanged man, Gwynplaine was issuing a caution intent on salvation, "prenez garde", (XIV, p. 348), but it was not heeded. Gwynplaine is annihilated like the screamer before him, but his self-sacrificing cry is unsuccessful. Moreover, the hanged man was aware that screaming would lead to his destruction, but Gwynplaine was not. Defining himself only as a scream foretold his imminent death: such a cry is only momentary. "Le cri" of Gwynplaine bears witness to merciless chaos. Endeavouring to achieve universal redemption, this scream resulted in personal obliteration.

Some of the most significant screams in the later novels are bestial "hurlements". These resonances imply a further degeneration in human communication. Man does not merely cry: he cries like an animal. He has regressed, uttering the protracted cacophony that is emitted by dogs and wolves. Gaping, howling mouths affirm the presence of chaos, but there is the additional suggestion that chaos has induced insanity, because the screamer imitates a whelping cur.

Howling is performed by Michelle Fléchard, the cosmos and, most

considerably, by the man-wolf, Homo. Screaming announces the presence of chaos, but their "hurlements" specificially attest to its destructive activity.

The "hurlement" made by Michelle Fléchard in front of the blazing *Tourgue* casts doubt on her humanity:

"quand une femme le jette, on croit entendre une louve" (XV, p. 475). Her cry seems to indicate that she is a hunter, when in reality she is helpless. Like a hound protesting at the moon, she is powerless to resolve the situation that offends her. She had already professed "je ne suis pas une folle, je suis une mère" (XV, p. 449) and this wild, apparently futile call testifies to the madness of others. She utters the sound of the mother who would be pitied more: "une chienne, on aurait pitié d'une chienne!" (XV, p. 476).

This lupine call suggests the savagery of those who have dared to imperil her children and her open mouth announces the presence of chaos. Michelle alerts Lantenac to the chaos that he has made: "moi on m'a fusillée, eux on les brûle!" (XV, p. 476). His orders have transformed the "côté civilisé" (XV, p. 430) of *la Tourgue* into an inferno, so that the whole of his ancestral home resembles Babel. Michelle is prevented from saving her children by two malevolent mouths. A "ravin béant" (XV, p. 474) threatens to engulf those who attempt to approach *la Tourgue* and the fiery jowls of a dragon appear to be consuming her children:

> "cette flamme sortait comme une langue de quelque chose qui ressemblait à une gueule et qui était une fenêtre pleine de feu" (XV, p. 474).

Lantenac's arson has duplicated the naturally occurring chaos in the ravine before *la Tourgue*. Mouths of chaos are easily and perpetually renewed.

The cosmos in L'Homme Qui Rit is also seen to announce imminent destruction with a howl. Imprisoned within the encroaching chaos of the

night and the sea, the fleeing *comprachicos* are enveloped in the scream of the cosmos. "Ce cri, c'est l'ouragan" (XIV, p. 87), and countless lives are expended in such storms. Hugo suggests that mankind is made to pay very dearly in order that the universe can freely express itself.

The storm which kills the *comprachicos* indicates the presence of "le monstre" (XIV, p. 87) and not "l'âme" (XIV, p. 87) within the universe, so it is a diabolic vociferation that strikes them down. A deafening, murderous howl fills the air, but no contours of any animal can be perceived: "c'est l'informe, hurlant" (XIV, p. 87). The baying of the cosmos suggests that, like wild beasts, it regards mankind as an enemy to be eradicated and that it can adopt all of their aggressive capacities without having to assume their countenance. This scream of the universe has the concrete formation of a deadly snowstorm. Being shipwrecked can therefore signify being deafened by a cosmic scream.

The snowstorm is indicative of the ruthless, sanguinary nature of the cosmos, but it is also a prosecution:

> "l'espace se lamente et se justifie, c'est quelque chose comme la cause du monde plaidée" (XIV, p. 87).

Those who have evaded social justice are being tried by the voice of a cosmic court, which cannot be comprehended and therefore cannot be answered. The storm appears to reproachfully list their misdeeds and indict the *comprachicos* for them. "L'immense voix bestiale du monde" (XIV, p. 87) appears to speak for all the child victims who have been transformed into beasts by the *comprachicos*. The snowstorm is at once the solemn utterance of the judge and the execution.

It seems that the cosmos might be wailing because it is suffering: "cela semble un accès de maladie chronique" (XIV, p. 87). Indeed, there is the frightening indication that the universe is terminally ill. Hugo asserts that "l'océan" has a "tumeur" (XIV, p. 73) and the seas in which

the *Matutina* sails resemble pestiferous flesh:

> "toutes sortes d'intumescences déformaient la brume
> et se gonflaient [...] L'écume ressemblait à une lèpre" (XIV, p. 84).

Moreover, the cosmos also seems to be afflicted with incurable mental illness, "c'est plutôt de l'épilepsie répandue" (XIV, p. 87), so its pain must be acute. The mutilating *comprachicos* practise "chirurgie" (XIV, p. 46) and they are infected with cancer and madness. It appears that there is a "reprise du chaos sur la création" (XIV, p. 87) and it comes to reclaim those who had imposed chaos on God's human creations.

As has already been noted, the cry of the wolf at the end of L'Homme Qui Rit is one of the most remarkable utterances in the later novels. It is difficult to dismiss this howl. It is not a reflex noise made by an indeterminate animal. It is 'Man', the tamed beast, who is baying. The wolf speaks in his own voice at the end of L'Homme Qui Rit, suggesting that man has reverted to his true savage nature. The howl is perhaps a lament for this human regression.

At sea, beneath the black night sky (XIV, p. 384), on a foreign ship *en route* for an alien land, Homo is the only visible, cognizant character who witnesses Gwynplaine's suicide and his call harshly returns his master to the consciousness that both of his adopted children are dead. The distress of this realisation vividly evokes a discerning observation made by Jean Gaudon, in his article in L'Homme Qui Rit ou la Parole-Monstre de Victor Hugo:

> "dans ce roman...le savoir est lui aussi, entraîné dans
> la tourmente: il n'est plus, comme dans Notre-Dame
> de Paris, l'auxiliaire et le révélateur du sens profond,
> mais un des instruments de la débâcle du réel".[19]

This howl is not merely a domesticated animal's expression of longing for his departed companion. As a shout of grief, Homo's whine is sinister. Hugo employs the blackest of humour. The tamed wolf is literally "un chien

qui hurle à la mort".

Homo's cry avows that chaos reigns. Gwynplaine was made to wear a chaotic mouth and he drowns before the *Vograat* reaches the open sea, near to "l'embouchure de la Medway" (XIV, p. 380). Homo's open jaws represent the chaos that has engulfed Gwynplaine. He howls "en regardant la mer" (XIV, p. 384) and his moan is identifying and accusing the sea as the mouth that has swallowed his master's son. Homo appears to be pursuing Gwynplaine "dans l'ombre" (XIV, p. 384) and the darkness above is reflected by that below. Chaos seems to be threatening to immerse the world in indistinct obscurity. The representations of chaos, 'La Mer et la Nuit', are appropriating the universe.

Whilst Homo's "hurlement" deplores the eradication of the benevolent, it also precedes destruction, like the howl of the storm that killed the *comprachicos*. However, Homo's cry may prefigure self-destruction. In 'Commencement de la Fêlure', Hugo states: "la rage admire; cela s'appelle l'envie. Alors elle hurle" (XIV, p. 219). Since howling can sometimes therefore express envy in Hugo's works, Homo's howl can be interpreted as the deep yearning to follow Gwynplaine to the grave. The *Vograat* is transporting Homo and Ursus to a country that will almost certainly execute them (XIV, p. 36), so this longing will be fulfilled. The irony of the wolf's baying can be appreciated, because "hurler avec les loups" can have the meaning "s'accommoder aux manières violentes ou injustes des personnes avec qui l'on vit", and this interpretation of Homo's howl is particularly alarming, since he and his master are bound for a nation which will surely not allow them to adapt to it (XIV, p. 36).[20].

Homo informs his master of the presence of chaos, but it will engulf those who recognise it. Gwynplaine had intended to be the interpreter of cries, "je traduirai les grondements, les hurlements,...et tous ces cris de

bêtes qu'à force d'ignorance et de souffrance on fait pousser aux hommes" (XIV, p. 364). However, he is lost at the end of the novel and only the scream that attests to the power of chaos, remains. *Chaos* is not *vaincu* at the end of L'Homme Qui Rit: it is the victor.

Screaming appears to be the only response to chaos. To aver its invincible existence is the last act before chaos increases its sway. Moreover, there is the indication that humanity is alone in its struggle against its primordial foe. Ursus is convinced that God is in collusion with chaos:

> "je suis convaincu que le bon Dieu ordonne aux damnés de se taire, sans quoi ce serait Dieu qui serait damné, d'entendre un cri éternel" (XIV, p. 207).

Ursus thus interprets screaming as the affirmation of humanity. The victory of chaos would be a silent and imperceptible one without a remorseful cry. Howls and screams incite listeners to recognise that the ignoble is eroding humanity.

Chaos

In the first section of this chapter, I have endeavoured to illustrate that the mouth is an inherently malevolent place. Hugo shows that actions occurring in the interior of the mouth, and energies which issue from it, are destructive. A gaping mouth is representative of chaos, and the varying malign oral functions performed by a gaping mouth demonstrate that chaos is not merely an idea, but an active entity.

The mouth is the medium enabling chaos to prosper. What, then, is the nature of the chaos to which the mouth leads? Hugo envisaged chaos existing in several domains: within the body, in human society and in the cosmos. For human beings, there appears to be no escape from chaos, which has pervaded their flesh, their civilisation and their universe.

Organically, chaos is found in the nether recesses of the body,

particularly in the stomach, in the sexual organs and in the anus. *La cave pénale* and *la Tourgue* are both depicted as ancient, gigantic monsters with chaos flourishing in their entrails. Gwynplaine and Gauvain and his men are confined within an "intestin" (XIV, p. 255, XV, p. 458). Claustration within a dark, dank and narrow corridor is the immediate human experience of chaos. The light of day does not filter into the bowels and the invading revolutionaries find that they have "les yeux aux ténèbres" (XV, p. 458). They are far from safety or liberty. Gwynplaine and the revolutionaries travel through black, constricted and oozing passages. Gwynplaine is surrounded by water (XIV, p. 255), whilst Gauvain's men moil in blood (XV, p. 459). The wall of *la cave pénale* "suintait" and "le dallage...avait la viscosité d'un intestin" (XIV, p. 255).

These stomachs physically encroach upon human beings. Gwynplaine discovers "l'on en était venu à ne plus pouvoir marcher que la tête courbée" (XIV, p. 255) and the revolutionary battalion "se heurtait le front aux granits, les pieds aux gravats" (XV, p. 458). The plight of the snatched prisoner and of the battling champions of progress is debased and appears more grave. They appear to have been eaten, and they are being passed through a digestive system.

Moreover, it seems that the transudations of the stomachs' interiors are striving to invade the very pores of mortal flesh. To be imprisoned within a stomach is to be ensnared within a process of ever increasing deterioration. Its liquid nature suggests the determination to molest humanity and to reduce it to the soulless and the repugnant. The obscurity in the stomach is indicative of the oblivion to which the human will be dispatched after having been forced to endure the degradation of his being. The stomach thus offers no hope of improvement or salvation. It could be said that those who are seen within the intestines of these medieval gaols

do not flourish afterwards. Perhaps the reader has had enough of intestinal descriptions, so I will conclude by saying that the stomach represents pure egotism, a living organ which diminishes the life of others to maintain its own existence.

La pieuvre embodies the exemplary chaotic stomach. Her centre is a viscous, elastic pouch (XII, p. 741) which is suggestive of a stomach, but in actuality she appears to have no viscera. Her "hiatus unique" (XII, p. 741) operates simultaneously as "l'anus" and "la bouche" (XII, p. 742), but no reference is made to the intestines which usually connect these orifices. *La pieuvre* appears to concretise an ancient concept, since the ancient Greek for "mouth" is an abbreviation of the word for "stomach".[21] In the case of *la pieuvre*, there is sinister import in the contraction between mouth, belly and anus. Hugo implies that she has such an appetite for human beings that she has dispensed with the process of digestion. Those eaten by this sea monster cannot hope that they will be delivered like Jonah. To be swallowed by her is synonymous with being excreted by her. The grisly fate of being devoured is made more horrifying because this scavenger excretes through the same orifice that she has used to taste and eat her food.

La pieuvre is representative of visceral chaos but she peculiarly evokes a feminine disorder. As I elucidated in Chapter One, the head of *la pieuvre* compares with a stomach and a uterus. Hugo perceives chaos in copulation, which involves movement, change, secretions and the indistinctness of two separate individuals. During her assault upon him, Gilliatt is forced to endure *la pieuvre*'s femininity merging with his masculinity, her monstrosity blending with his humanity and her evil obscuring his benevolence. Gilliatt experiences the terror of losing his mortality to its diabolic antithesis.

The female chaos of *la pieuvre* is not content with creating ambiguity. She seeks supremacy for her viscid, gluttonous mass and she intends the complete erosion of the male gender. The uterine form of *la pieuvre* awards her no positive connotations of revivification. Her singular orifice is a mouth and she employs it to ingest her victims into chaos. The stomach and uterus of many females in the universe of Les Travailleurs de la Mer are shown to be huge reservoirs of evil. The only positive uterine receptacle in this novel is "la panse" of the virginal male hero and he alone is responsible for installing Lethierry's engine into it. Positive reproduction is the domain of the male only in this work.

Chaos is quintessentially confusion and with a "bouche/vagin/anus" *la pieuvre* demonstrates indistinctness in every tissue of her body. The lack of divisions in material chaos is represented in social chaos also. *La pieuvre* performs many functions with her single orifice. The residents of *la Jacressarde* have the same abode and even "le même sommeil d'accablement sur le même lit de boue" (XII, p. 623) but they cannot be individually recognised. They are the anonymous, "les inconnus" (XII, p. 622). Similarly, the *comprachicos* speak "le vieux jargon punique" (XIV, p. 49) and practise the same profession, "un crime" (XIV, p. 50), but they do not share an identical origin:

> "sous ce nom, *comprachicos*, fraternisaient des anglais, des français, des castillans, des allemands, des italiens" (XIV, p. 49).

The absence of distinction in physical chaos is terrifying, but in social chaos it is more dismaying. The female chaos of *la pieuvre* is naturally occurring, but social chaos has been deliberately designed by men. "Les inconnus" of *la Jacressarde* are such because no-one appears to want to know them. Those who are abandoned by the society of Saint Malo and who are forced to subsist in *la Jacressarde* compare with the unfortunate

individuals who are kidnapped by Roland in La Nouvelle Justine, and he assures his slaves that they are beyond the help of anyone. Sade and Hugo suggest the deep unconcern that men have towards their fellows.

The undefined constitution of the *comprachicos* is more sinister. They have made confusion by dissolving natural boundaries, "des anglais, des français", and they have done so only to realise "une même pensée" (XIV, p. 49), which is iniquitous. Their apparent confraternity is a cabal. The evil that is innate within *la pieuvre* was therefore premeditated by the *comprachicos*, who indifferently invigorate chaos.

The chaotic essence of the societies of *la Jacressarde* and of the *comprachicos* is reinforced by their foul liquidity, which suggests the stomach and the decomposition it engineers. In *la Jacressarde*, "cette putridité humaine fermentait dans cette cuve" (XII, p. 623), and the *comprachicos* are a grave danger to those who come into contact with them: "ces ruisseaux d'hommes vénéneux coulant à part, avec quelque empoisonnement autour d'eux" (XIV, p. 51). The fluid nature of the *comprachicos* suggests their ability to filter into the heart of the population and poison it. They have the potential to corrupt and to convert all of their society into chaos.

The organic chaos of *la pieuvre* threatened to transform the hero of Les Travailleurs de la Mer into its discharge. Gilliatt evaded this metamorphosis, but it appears that the inhabitants of *la Jacressarde* and the *comprachicos* are evacuated material.[22] *La Jacressarde* houses "le tas d'ordure des âmes" (XII, p. 622), and "les comprachicos étaient plutôt...un résidu qu'une association". (XIV, p. 49).[23] As excretions, these characters represent what has been disdainfully rejected because it has been deemed useless. Noxious to life, residues are slow to fade away, and theirs is a presence which can never be totally erased. They signify the

undesired eternal and invincible, because they are the inevitable product of any destruction. Residues are the vilest of matter, deprived of any vestige of their original identity, but continuing to persist, despite their devastation. As repulsive, harmful and enduring matter, the anonymous of *la Jacressarde* and the *comprachicos* are the concentrations of chaos.

The oral imagery associated with *la Jacressarde* forcefully demonstrates its chaotic character. Those reduced to dwelling there have been expelled by the disgusted mouth of society: "c'est plutôt le crachat de la société que son vomissement" (XII, p. 622). That chaos governs *la Jacressarde* is unequivocal. Having been ejected from the mouth, these human wastes are forced to reside within a mouth-like structure:

> "la Jacressarde était plutôt...un puits qu'une cour...Au milieu de cette cour, on apercevait un trou rond,...La cour était petite, le puits était grand" (XII, p. 622).

La Jacressarde appears to be a mouth which has swallowed its occupants, the "trou rond" being the opening of the oesophogeal well. Moreover, like an eating, salivating mouth, this well seeps into the courtyard, soaking the human beings there:

> "le puits...toujours béant, avait trente pieds de profondeur. La pluie y tombait, les immondices y suintaient" (XII, p. 623).

The residents are being prepared for consumption.[34] A well usually sustains life, "le seau pour tirer l'eau était à côté" (XII, p. 623), but this well is a mouth of chaos and it cannot be distinguished from a murderer. The mouth of chaos in *la Jacressarde* is vigorous. Its inhabitants have been regurgitated, but their re-ingestion seems inevitable:

> "qui avait soif, y buvait. Qui avait ennui, s'y noyait" (XII, p. 623).

Such is the insidious might of chaos that these unfortunates willingly

offer themselves for absorption. The mouth of chaos has no sense of revulsion or ignominy. It will readily resorb what it has regorged. The society within *la Jacresserde* is especially a victim of the mouth of chaos. Their plight is so miserable that they do not even know whether they are its fodder or its filth.

Cosmic Chaos

The dissolution of barriers and the presence of residues indicates the process of liquefaction. The realms of the organic and the social appear to have adopted the properties of the sea, which is the most considerable mouth of chaos in the later novels. Fleeing from society will effect no escape from chaos, which thrives in the natural world of the elements also:

> "l'océan...ce chaos,...est le récipient universel,... Il amasse, puis disperse,...il dévore, puis crée. Il reçoit tous les égouts de la terre, et il les thésaurise" (XII, pp. 676-677).

What is more, chaos in the indestructible waters is invincible: "de tous les pêle-mêle, l'océan est le plus indivisible et le plus profond" (XII, p. 676).[28]

The sea is the most potent representation of the mouth of chaos. The murky waters of the sea can be seen to encapsulate all that Hugo feared and abhorred most. The dark waters are treacherous not only because of their depth, but because they hide blood-sucking monsters like *la pieuvre*. This ability to conceal its murderous agents renders the sea a reservoir of virulent hypocrisy.

The sea is a place of negative transformation, reducing human beings to insignificant morsels and forcing them also to unite with ordures. The *Douvres* appear to be surrounded by a vast sewer, not an ocean: "la mer y est seule...Elle...met les caecums en communication" (XII, p. 689). In the chaotic mouth of the sea, a man's experience of evil is the appreciation

that his body is no more significant than any other matter in the universe. Cosmic evil is the absolute refusal to recognise humanity. It is well known that Hugo had a profound physical understanding of evil and chaos. The sea signifies infinite materiality, in its mass of molecules and in the litter it contains. The diminutive victim of shipwreck easily loses his life and the integrity of his being. In the sea, he is made to integrate with all that is ignoble. The immeasurable perimeters of the sea suggest that it has the capability to plunge the entire planet into primeval disarray.

Hugo determined that the sea would be an omnipresence in the later novels and it seems to particularly evoke many aspects of his appreciation of evil. Fundamentally, evil is synonymous with obscurity, "l'unique péril social, c'est l'Ombre" (XI, p. 533) and the deep, dark waters of the sea award tangibility to this fear of the night. The sea is the terrestrial correlation of celestial blackness: "le gouffre est analogue à la nuit" (XII, p. 636). When night falls, it can thus be seen to close its jaws around the earth. However, the night disappears with the dawn but the sea does not: it is constantly visible, palpable evil.

Jean-Pierre Reynaud has too readily dismissed the malevolence of obscurity in Hugo's works:

> "de même la nuit n'est jamais pour lui que l'absence - provisoire - du jour". [24]

He does not take into account the heavy dominance of 'la Mer et la Nuit' at the end of Les Travailleurs de la Mer and L'Homme Qui Rit. The individual perceives that his existence is negated by the nothingness that he observes in a dark universe.

Les Misérables, on the other hand, is imbued with shining rays. At the end of the novel, there is the reassuring brilliance of dawn, 'Suprême Ombre, Suprême Aurore', but boundless obscurity reigns in the later novels.

Hugo's appeals for light in Les Misérables, "lumière! et obstinons-nous-y! Lumière! lumière!" (XI, p. 443) are not responded to in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize. Light has been replaced by the impenetrable blackness that is constituted by the night and the sea. Their capacity is such that they appear to threaten to eliminate all radiance.

In Philosophie, Commencement d'un Livre, Hugo evinces that obscurity is the permanent condition of the cosmos:

"l'état normal du ciel, c'est la nuit" (XII, p. 30).

The later novels seem to portray this omnipresent blackness of the cosmos. The night and the sea of the later novels resemble two evil sisters who enshroud the universe in darkness. Hugo gives a crepuscular setting to the drowning of Gilliatt, Gwynplaine and the *comprachicos*. With darkness all around them and above them, there appears to be no escape from 'la Grande Tombe'.

When the cosmos obscures itelf so that nothing is perceptible, chaos reigns:

"dans ce grand monde crépusculaire ouvert de toutes parts, qu'y avait-il pour cet enfant? Rien.
Il marchait vers ce Rien" (XIV, p. 63).

"Ce grand monde" has been reduced to "rien" by the night, the all-embracing cloak of chaos. Similarly, at the end of Les Travailleurs de la Mer, "il n'y eut plus rien que la mer"(XII, p. 793), but this bathotic "nothing" ceaselessly commits genocide, killing heroes and villains alike. Chaos transforms everything into nothing.

The wretched of *la Jacresserde* return to chaos by falling into the well, one of its many mouths. Those who are swallowed by the mouth of chaos are made to fall into ignominy, like the First Man. In L'Homme Qui Rit, Hugo elicits that "descendre, c'est l'entrée dans l'ignoré terrible"

(XIV, p. 256). "Cette gueule, la mer" (XII, p. 751) magnifies this fear of plummeting. Those who fall to the bottom of the sea do not ascend alive from it. The association between plunging into chaos and the Fall of Man suggests the undeserved, harsh castigation of banishment and reinforces that chaos has its fundamental origins in feminine evil.

Hugo did of course define the sea as "l'abîme" but it is not an inanimate one. The image of the abyss evokes the idea of a fall to a terrifying death. The precariousness of human existence is forcefully implied and Hugo intensifies this suggestion. The abyss of the sea has jaws and teeth so that those who drown do not simply fall: they are devoured by a ravenous predator.

The sea is not merely evil matter in its entirety. Waves, currents and tides are constantly moving. The sea actively threatens to dissolve the organised universe. Moreover, the sea is more culpable than an immense, uncontrollable mass. Hugo affirms that "les éléments savent ce qu'ils font et où ils vont" (XII, p. 639). The sea strives to achieve its objective of a pan-chaotic cosmos. In works where a positive bias exists, such as Les Misérables, Hugo envisages the most progressive of transformations: "notre fumier est or" (XI, p. 873). In the later novels, however, Hugo focuses upon the sea, which represents and performs the antithesis to this benevolent metamorphosis. Its incommutable waters debase and diminish human life.

Primordial chaos thrives in the salt waters and intends to plunge present and future advancement into its swirling midst. Moreover, "la mer" has not changed throughout the centuries and she will not change. The recalcitrant rejection of progress is concretised in the waters of the sea and engulfment into oblivion appears inevitable.

Conclusion

Hugo's earlier works bear witness to an interest in chaotic mouths, but it could perhaps be considered that he became more preoccupied with them after 1843. As Charles Baudouin has pointed out, Léopoldine perished in "l'embouchure de la Seine".[27] Jean Massin has observed that the manuscript of L'Homme Qui Rit bears the date '4 septembre' in the chapter 'Nix et Nox' of 'l'Ourque en Mer', and it must also not be forgotten that Gwynplaine drowns near to the "embouchure" of the Thames.[28]

In his later novels, Hugo indicates that the mouth is an intensely evil place. It could be said that Hugo became more convinced of the malignity of the mouth, because many more oral functions are negatively depicted in L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize. The mouth is essential to human communication and interaction, but it invariably engenders the hostility of the animal kingdom among men. There is aggression in even the intellectual and involuntary actions of speaking and yawning. An individual can remonstrate against chaos with a scream, but his open mouth will assert its destructive power nevertheless. The mouth is dictated to by chaos, not by humanity.

The prevalence of threatening mouths of chaos in the later novels accentuates the precariousness of man. The plethora of open mouths in the social and natural environments indicates that oblivion is a constant and imminent peril. Female chaos is not merely an ancient concept in the later novels: it is robust and violent.[29]

In the introduction to this thesis, I drew attention to the image of shipwreck that occurs in the later novels. The omnipresence of this disaster can be explained in relation to the mouth of chaos. Shipwreck can be seen to represent the universal human condition, because the mouth of chaos strives to pulverise all men and absorb them into its midst. As

Gwynplaine admonishes the mocking lords, "sachez-le, l'abîme est pour tous" (XIV, p. 351). The ultimate experience of humanity appears to be the devastation of shipwreck. Chaotic mouths and their resultant shipwrecks incontrovertibly confirm the potency of evil in Hugo's later novels.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. The *Douvres*, Chess-Hill and the *Vendéen* countryside of Quatrevingt-Treize all threaten to engulf the humans who walk on them.

2. Some measure of the negativity associated with the mouth can be seen in the selection of names in L'Homme Qui Rit. It can be no accident that Hugo chose Weymouth to evoke the hostility of human society, or that Lord Yarmouth decries Gwynplaine in the House of Lords (XIV, p. 352).

3. Charles Baudouin perceives the presence of "le système sadique-anal de Freud" in the "fonctions digestives" depicted by Hugo. (Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo, p. 78).

4. A line from Hernani can be seen to prefigure the exact connotations of teeth in the later novels. Dona Sol explains that the poison which is fatal to her is like "Une hydre à mille dents qui ronge et qui dévore" (Act V, Scene 6). Teeth in the later novels are equally numerous, and monstrous in their functioning. They are horrific because they cruelly erode and because they are intent on absorption.

5. Room's Classical Dictionary, p. 91.

6. The menace of trenchant teeth vividly conveys the theme of physical oppression that is present in all of the later novels. *La pieuvre* physically oppresses her victims and this monstrous practice is inflicted by the powerful in the societies of L'Homme Qui Rit and Quatrevingt-Treize. The ordinary people in Stuart England are crushed by the nobility: "vos pieds marchent sur des têtes" (XIV, p. 350) and the Vendéens are weighed down upon by the revolutionary battalions marching above them. Being penetrated and consumed by a greater, ruthless mass appears to be a fate which cannot be avoided. Ursus declares "l'écrasement est une loi" (XIV, p. 206). The cruelty of the oppressors is indicated by their determination to humiliate their victims by making them painfully aware of their physical insignificance. Immensity is omnipotent in the later novels.

7. Jean-Pierre Reynaud comments upon the relationship between laughter, death and teeth in his article 'Le Rire monstre' in L'Homme Qui Rit ou la Parole Monstre de Victor Hugo: "le rire et la tête de mort ont ceci de commun qu'ils *montrent les dents*. Ici peut-être s'explique toute la culpabilité fantasmatique qui s'est fixée sur le rire: par l'exhibition qu'il fait de l'organe prédateur, il devient l'emblème de la

morsure, c'est-à-dire de l'agression et de la cruauté, mais aussi de l'avidité criminelle et de tous les appétits de la chair, du festin monstrueux en un mot, où l'homme, imitant les rois et les dieux, insulte à la chaste gravité des astres et cherche à anéantir son âme..." (p. 179)

8. Barkilphedro's character suggests some of the most powerful "images *cannibaliques* (où l'ennemi est dévoré)", to which Baudouin refers in Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo (p. 78).

9. Laurent Jenny, La Terreur et les Signes, Poétiques de Rupture, Gallimard, Paris, 1982, p. 109.

10. See the Pléiade edition of the Oeuvres Complètes of Rabelais, p. 133. Chapter XXXVIII of Gargantua is entitled 'Comment Gargantua mangea en sallade six pèlerins'.

11. Professor Thompson has indicated that "l'ourque" is suggestive of "l'orque, le monstre marin" (L'Homme Qui Rit ou la Parole-Monstre de Victor Hugo, p. 131). As a monstrous, diabolic entity, the *Matutina* deserves to be destroyed.

12. In Dieu, Hugo purports that all currents of energy have an infernal origin:
"Toutes les forces sont les chevaux de l'abîme".

13. Hugo gave this explanation to Paul Meurice. See XV, p. 499, footnote 6.

14. "Mais surtout, cette ourque s'appelle la *Matutina*, ce qui la rattache au motif - clair pour nous - de l'aube." (Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo, p. 172)

15. Concise Oxford Dictionary, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1976, p. 1352.

16. "On a donc 'Geestemunde', personnage secondaire et porteur d'un nom au symbolisme évident...pour qui connaît l'allemand et la thématique hugolienne: 'Geeste', 'Geist', l'âme, l'esprit et 'munde' 'Mund', la bouche." (M. Grimaud, 'Compétence narrative et nom propre', L'Homme Qui Rit ou la Parole-Monstre de Victor Hugo, p. 150)

17. A connection between the crow and chaos can be seen in Dieu. Chaos is the subject of Dieu, II, Charles Baudouin discusses the portrayal of chaos in this poem in Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo, p. 82.

18. The Raven, by Edgar Allen Poe, could be recalled by Hugo's sketch of this bird.

19. The impossibility of defining or distinguishing appears to be an evil in the Hugolian consciousness. Charles Baudouin provides several examples of this malevolent indistinctness. See Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo. p. 62.

20. Nouveau Larousse Illustré, Publié sous la direction de Claude Augé, Paris, Tome Neuvième, p. 459.

21. "*stoma -atos*, mouth" (Concise Oxford Dictionary, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1976, p. 1133.

22. Charles Baudouin first recognised that the residents of *la Jacressarde* and the *comprachicos* are described as residues: "nous retrouvons en raccourci dans ces quelques phrases tout le système digestion - agression - mutilation (résidu - crime - haillons)" (La Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo. p. 87).

23. *"le mot suffit à situer le monde des comprachicos dans la série hugolienne des 'cloaques' (Cour des Miracles de* N.D.P., *bas-fonds des* Misérables, Jacressarde des Travailleurs de la Mer)" (XIV, p. 49).

24. This chaotic opening is interpreted as an anus in Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo (p. 83), but this text also indicates the vaginal associations of a well: "plaisir visuel, curiosité de l'enfant quant aux organes maternels (puits)..." (p. 49). Baudouin's perceptions confirm that this well is a potent mouth of chaos.

25. In L'Homme Qui Rit "le pêle-mêle" is identified as the result of an eruption or an explosion, a rapidly moving current without any direction. Josiane's words "avaient le pêle-mêle de l'éruption" (XIV, p. 315). "Le pêle-mêle" can be seen to be chaos in motion.

26. 'Le Rire monstre', L'Homme Qui Rit ou la Parole-Monstre de Victor Hugo. p. 177.

27. Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo. p. 121, footnote 1.

28. See XIV, p. 88, footnote 1.

29. However, it is not the sea, but engulfment itself, which seizes the *comprachicos*: "l'engloutissement les résorbait en silence" (XIV, p. 103). The cosmos seems so impatient with the *comprachicos* that it dispenses with swallowing them and ingests them immediately into its chaos.

CONCLUSION

The subjects I have studied in this thesis indicate that Hugo's later novels did not convey the optimism of their predecessors. It has been said that "les développements trop connus sur 'le noir chez Hugo' oublient l'essentiel. Et l'essentiel, c'est que Hugo n'habite pas l'énigme, mais la foi." [1] I have never attempted to deny that Hugo believed in God, but "le noir" also unquestionably exists in his later novels. Indeed, it cannot be said that Hugo chose to introduce Les Contemplations with an entirely positive depiction of God, since he associates him principally with the wrathful forces of the cosmos, "la mer" and "le vent". To disregard the pessimism of the later novels is to fail to appreciate what is, in my opinion, one of the most powerful of all of Hugo's poetic visions: the abyss. In the boundless deep of the night and of the sea, God is an alien and a remote concept, but the darkness is very real.

Light has masculine connotations in Hugo because of its synonymity with God, and darkness in the later novels is invariably associated with the feminine. The presence of the evil female is one of the most striking features of these works and the evil depicted is principally committed either by females, or by areas of the cosmos considered feminine. This might suggest a deep-seated resentment in Hugo at his continuing enslavement to sexual needs. What it certainly shows is that the traditional association between woman and primeval disorder was embedded in the Hugolian unconscious.

The later novels are alarming because they indicate a reversal in Hugo's thought. Dimensions which had previously been positively depicted, such as change and cosmic justice, are almost entirely negative in the later novels, indicating that Hugo had become convinced that there was no ultimate assurance of progress or goodness. Those who emphasise that the

later novels proclaim resolute confidence in future advancement are attributing more importance to subjects in other *genres* and have not appreciated the devastation the fictions relate. Progress and benevolence are persistently defeated by death and destruction. When Hugo does refer to progress that has been achieved, such as the Revolution, he accentuates the evil inflicted and the human suffering endured, rather than the benefits that are won. In his later novels, Hugo is the painter of the Agony, not the Calvary. A glorious apotheosis is desired but it is the pain of human sacrifice which Hugo constantly chooses to portray.

Evil is an omnipresent and inescapable experience in the later novels. It is a force existing in society, in the natural environment and one which can penetrate even into the private recesses of the sleeping human brain. Moreover, the conscious human brain seems to have a distinct bent for inventing new and greater evils and its love of perpetrating evil is intense. Hugo's pessimistic representation of human society can be seen to be associated with a proposition referred to by Michel Foucault in Surveiller et Punir, in which he asserts that men will tirelessly employ their intellectual and physical energies to develop evil, but not to advance good:

> "c'est un phénomène inexplicable que l'étendue de l'imagination des hommes en fait de barbarie et de cruauté". [2.]

In the 1860s, Hugo became increasingly concerned with the barbarity and regression rife among his fellow men seventy years after the Revolution. He had beseeched his readers in the name of progress in Les Misérables, but in the later novels he seems to believe that there is only hope for improvement: "aspirons aux mondes moins ténébreux" (XII, p. 743).

If there is any transcendance in Hugo's evocation of the "mal commis par des hommes à l'égard de leurs semblables" [3.], it is perhaps that Hugo intended to instruct man of the absolute necessity for him to make correct

use of his liberty, "qui lui permet d'errer, de se perdre, mais aussi de choisir le bien, et, s'il le faut, de se repentir et de prier".[4] However, the later novels do suggest that a grave doubt hangs over men's desire to abandon cruelty. In "le combat du jour et de la nuit" of the later novels, it is the forces of darkness which appear to be winning the battle.[5]

FOOTNOTES TO CONCLUSION

1. Henri Guillemin, 'La Prière de Hugo', (XII, *p. X.*)

2. Encyclopédie Article entitled 'Supplice', written by Jaucourt, cited by Foucault in Surveiller et Punir, Gallimard, Paris, 1975, p. 37.

3. Henri Peyre, Victor Hugo. p. 52.

4. *op. cit.*, p. 50.

5. Hugo's dying words. See Jean Delalande, Victor Hugo à Hauteville-House, Editions Albin Michel, Paris, 1947, p. 178.

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1. Henri Guillemin, 'La Prière de Hugo', (XII, *p. X.*)

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3. Henri Peyre, Victor Hugo, p. 52.

4. *op. cit.*, p. 50.

5. Hugo's dying words. See Jean Delalande, Victor Hugo à Hauteville-House, Editions Albin Michel, Paris, 1947, p. 178.

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